

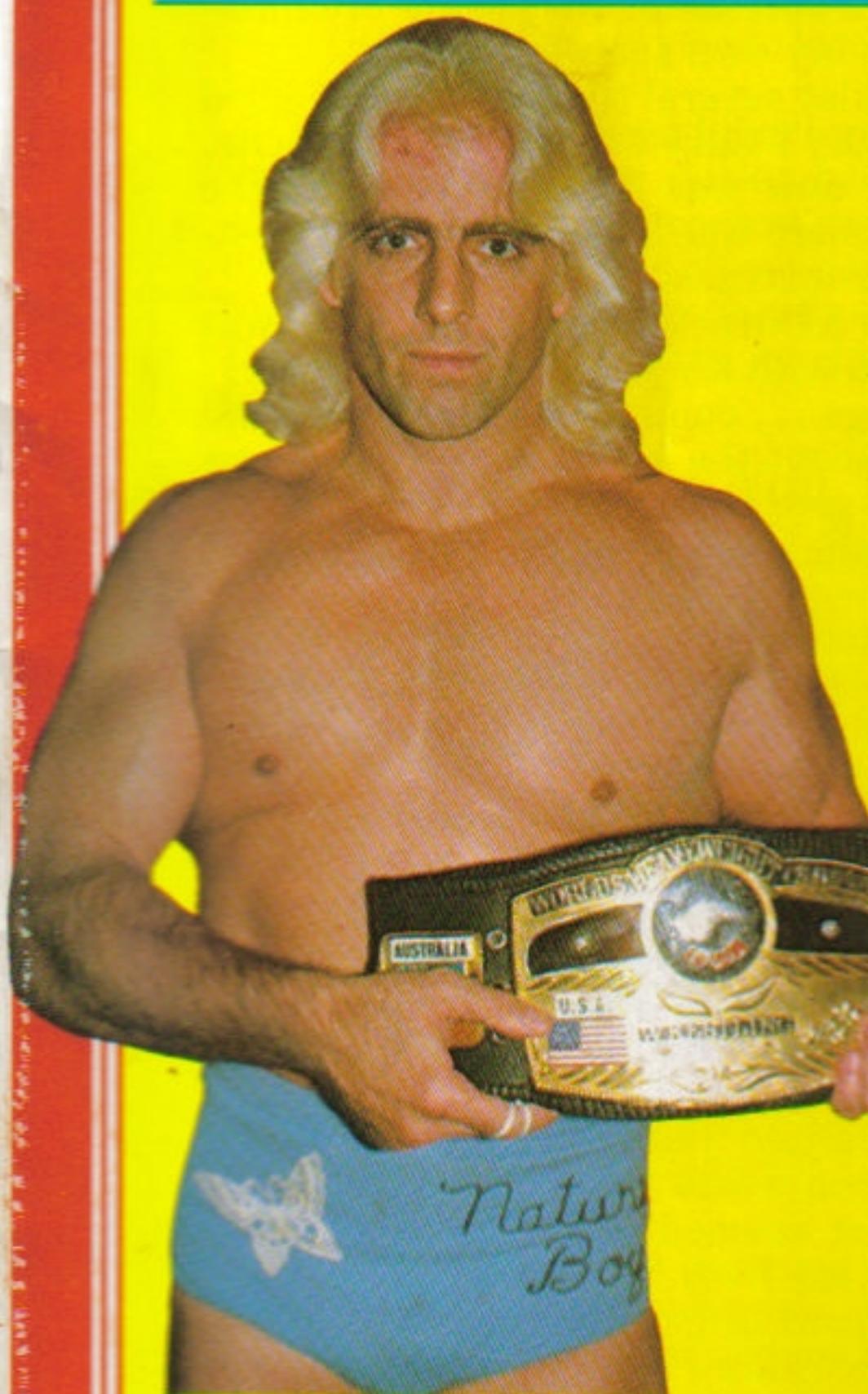
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PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED

SPECIAL YEAR-END AWARDS TO THE
WORLD'S GREATEST WRESTLERS!



WRESTLER
OF THE YEAR
Ric Flair

MOST IMPROVED
WRESTLER
Kevin Sullivan



INSPIRATIONAL
WRESTLER
Bob Backlund

TAG TEAM
OF THE YEAR
The Freebirds

MOST HATED
WRESTLER
Ken Patera

MATCH
OF THE YEAR
**Andre vs.
Killer Khan**



MOST POPULAR
WRESTLER
Tommy Rich

MANAGER
OF THE YEAR
Lou Albano

ROOKIE
OF THE YEAR
**Bruno
Sammartino Jr.**

KING'S COURT

By Peter King

DIRT AND GRIME were everywhere. The smell, an overpowering stench, nauseated me. It seemed every other step we took was hindered by an empty whiskey bottle.

The streets of New York's Lower East Side are mean. Most people think that only men with no hope end up there. But the saddest residents are the young kids who have run away from home. Children should not be forced to fend for themselves amongst the monstrous conditions of The Bowery.

"See that doorway over there?" said Adrian Adonis. "I once spent a night there. I was 13 years old."

I came to this unsavory part of New York to better understand the mind of Adonis. Ever since he came to the WWF, Adonis has been hated by all of wrestling. I thought if I walked these mean streets alongside the young rulebreaker, I might get a better understanding of why he insists on using such vicious ring actions.

"I've been on my own since I was nine," Adonis told me. "My old man threw me out of the



Adrian Adonis' behavior today is a direct result of his upbringing. Adonis was left on his own at the age of nine.

house. Said I was big enough to make it on my own." Adonis gave a bitter chuckle at the memory.

As we passed Tompkins Square Park, I asked Adonis if he would like to sit down for awhile. He shook his head and smiled. "Believe me," he said, "you don't want to sit in that park. One night, when I was 12, I saw this man get his head opened with a broken whiskey bottle. It was thrown at him by his wife."

As we continued our walk, Adonis grew pensive. "I've had a hard life," he said. "No one ever gave me a damn thing. I had to beg, borrow, and steal to live. It was survival, man. If I didn't take what I needed, I would've starved to death. This world is a jungle, baby. Kill or be killed. And I intend to live for a very long time."

We now stood at the foot of the Manhattan Bridge. A cold wind blew off the East River, chilling us even in our winter coats. Adonis looked up and pointed to the cars making their way over the bridge.

"These people, in their suits and ties, they take from this city during the day and go home to their cozy little suburban homes at night. And all they have to complain about are oil bills and gas prices." Adonis shook his head, a mean smirk on his lips. Suddenly, he began to shout. "What about me! I had nothing! Nobody ever gave a damn about me! I could starve to death or freeze to death and would anyone care? No, all they'd want to do is get home to their wives and mangy dogs. Hell, if I died in the middle of Canal Street, all these clowns would do is honk their horns because I was delaying them from getting home to their roast beef dinners."

Adonis walked a little ahead of me and kicked at an empty beer can. He turned around, a look of complete wickedness in his eyes.

"You want to know why I'm the way I am," he sneered. "You and all those pansy fans and wrestlers are all the same. You've had all the advantages. When a street kid like me tries to get his share, you call us

(Continued on page 58)

RINGSIDE

With Bill Apter

THE INCREDIBLE HULK HOGAN has certainly lived up to his name. Hulk is now \$10,000 richer after bodyslamming 400-pound-plus Crusher Blackwell during a special challenge match. "This goes to prove I am the strongest man in wrestling!" Hogan boasted just minutes after the mind-boggling feat. "Other so-called strongmen have tried to slam Blackwell but failed. Actually it was a breeze lifting up that bag of hot air."

"Polish Power" Ivan Putski and Big John Studd were involved in one of the most brutal wars in recent years in Montreal. The feud between these two started in Texas many years ago, and nothing has been settled . . . Studd is also involved in red-hot feuds with King Kong Mosca and Blackjack Mulligan. "It doesn't bother me," said Studd. "The more they try to hurt me, the stronger I become. Bring on the whole damn wrestling world. I'll whip 'em all!"

Les Thornton has regained the NWA Junior heavyweight title from Jerry Brisco . . . Following their recent double-disqualification bloodbath, Ray Stevens is begging for a rematch with NWA champ Ric Flair.

"It's either me or Assassin #1," says Bugsy McGraw. "One of us has to leave Florida. There ain't enough room for both of us here." Bugsy suggests that if you ever lent the masked man any money, get it back now, 'cause the Assassins' days in Florida are numbered.



It has not been an easy few months for Big John Studd. John has become involved in feuds with three of the toughest men in the sport: Ivan Putski, King Kong Mosca, and Blackjack Mulligan. Studd seems unconcerned, however, claiming that he welcomes the challenge.

The NWA has ruled that because his dive off the top rope poses no serious threat of injury to an opponent, rookie sensation Ron Richie can still use the maneuver . . . Blackjack Mulligan has taken the WWA title from Bruiser in Chicago. Mulligan now owns three titles—the WWA, the Mid-Southern, and the World Super Heavyweight belt.

Gary Hart's charge Great

Kabuki is in a lot of trouble. The mysterious Japanese man attacked Dusty Rhodes, forcing him out of a title match with NWA champion Ric Flair in Georgia. "That guy is gonna be sent back to Japan in a pine box!" vows Rhodes. Hart, saying that his man is not afraid of Rhodes, is also booking Kabuki in Florida, a place where Dusty wrestles a large percentage of his

(Continued on page 51)

DRESSING CONFIDENTIAL CONDOM

By Stu Saks

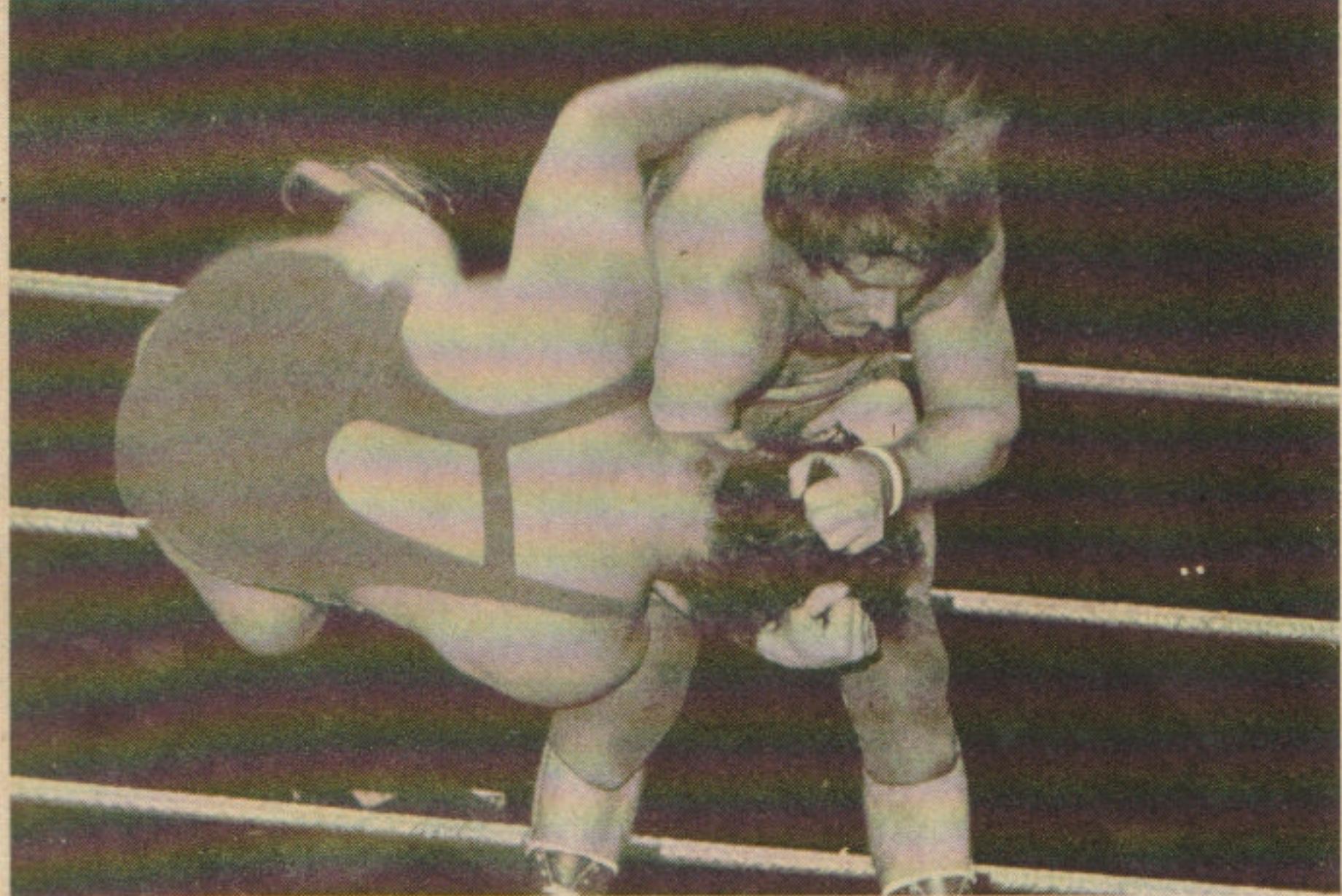
FOR MONTHS NOW, letters have been flooding this office from fans living in the Pacific Northwest in protest of our treatment of current Mid-Atlantic champion Roddy Piper.

"...he is number one wherever he goes, especially here in Portland, where we still love him," writes Christine LaVaque of Gresham, Oregon.

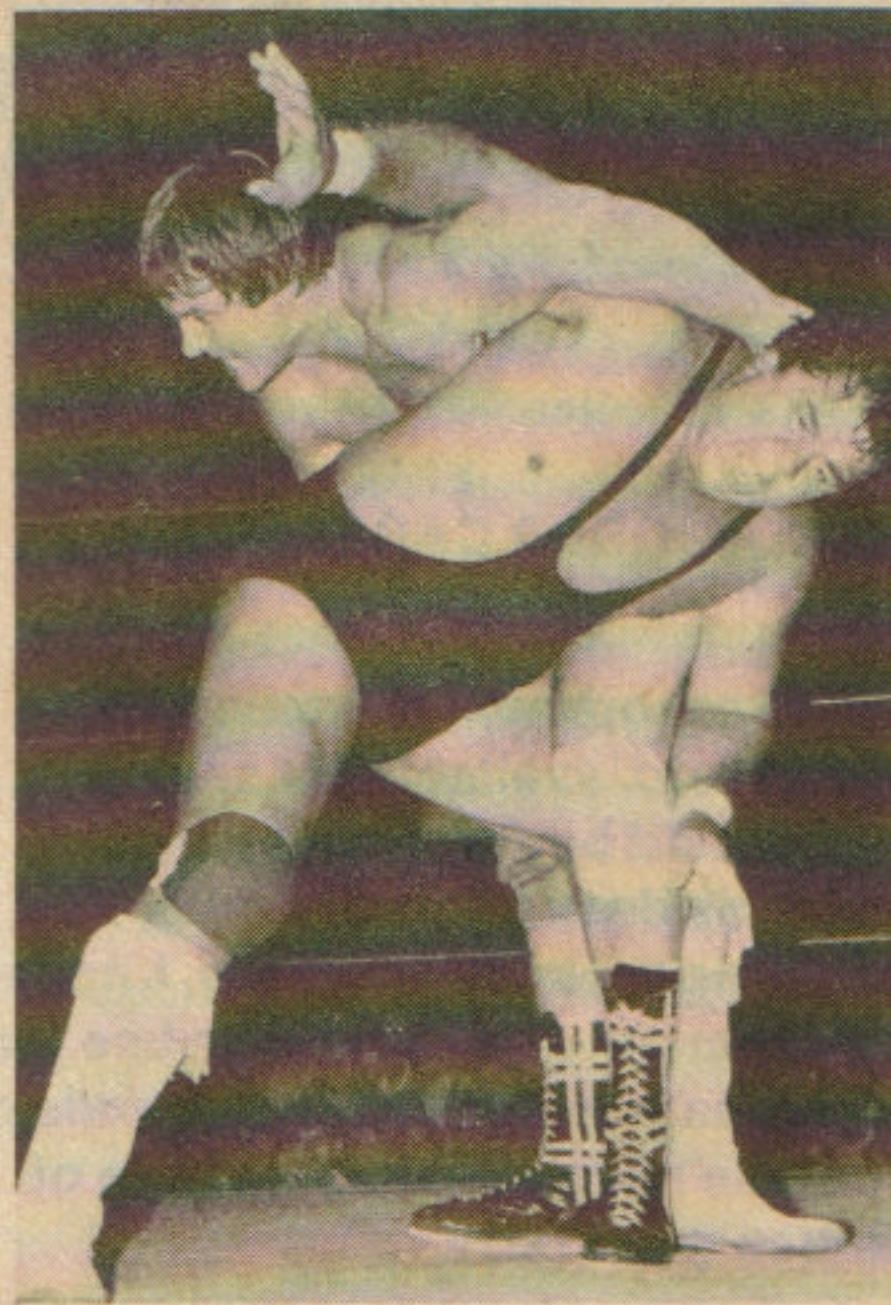
"The fans in the Mid-Atlantic must be crazy. Roddy Piper would never do anything to hurt the fans. He's a brilliant scientific wrestler and we all love him," writes Gary Edmonds, Portland, Oregon.

Loyalty is a damn admirable trait. I feel that the Northwestern fans are wasting theirs on Roddy Piper.

The Scottish wrestler is no longer the man the Northwest fans remember. He was a good man then, a man who spent much of his time doing charity work, a man who could be trusted. He wrestled such rule-breakers as Playboy Buddy Rose and Lord Jonathan Boyd, not for the personal glory, but to protect the region of the United States he loved the most. Years ago, he was quoted in a Portland newspaper as saying, "I had great doubts about this country [the United States] before I finally got the nerve to come over. You hear



Piper, hardly displaying the style that endears him to fans in the Pacific Northwest, drags his opponent to the mat by his hair (above). The Scottish superstar traps Wahoo McDaniel in an abdominal stretch (below).

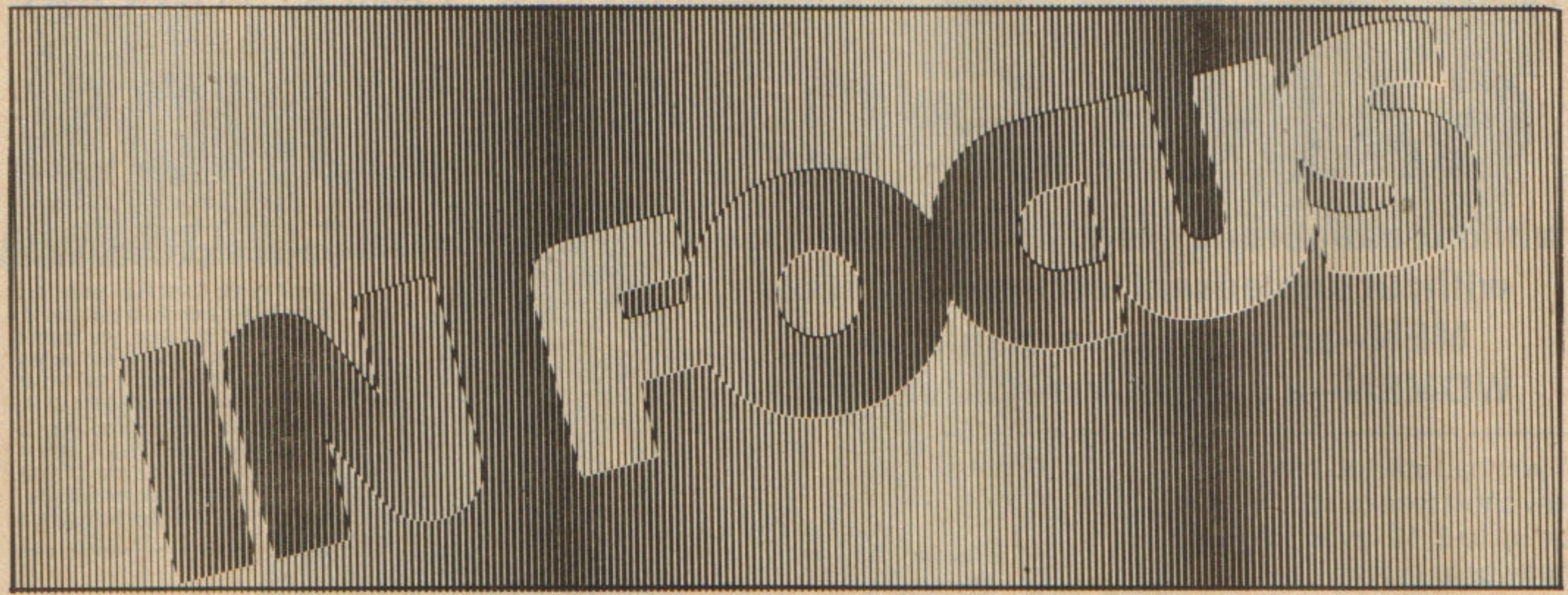


so much about the bad, but you've really got to see this part of the country to believe it. The scenery is gorgeous, the weather is extraordinary, and the people? The people are the greatest. I'll never disappoint them."

Before leaving the Northwest, Piper assured his fans that his absence would be temporary. He would be back after a short tour of the country. Roddy wound up in the Mid-Atlantic where he recently took the regional title from Rick Steamboat.

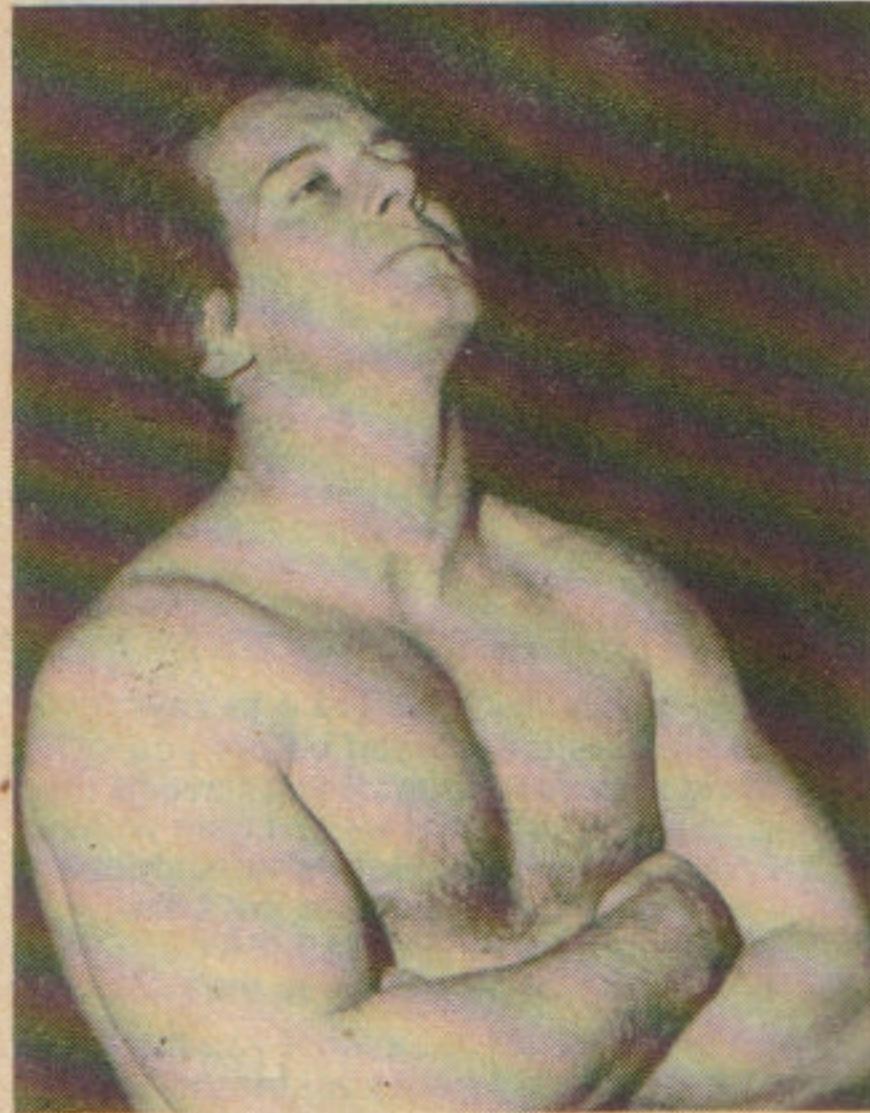
He obviously has no plans to return to the people who love

(Continued on page 54)



With CRAIG PETERS

PIPER LETS OFF STEAM



RODDY PIPER

Well, friends, it looks like dark days ahead for the Mid-Atlantic region. When Rick Steamboat snagged the title and the belt away from Ivan

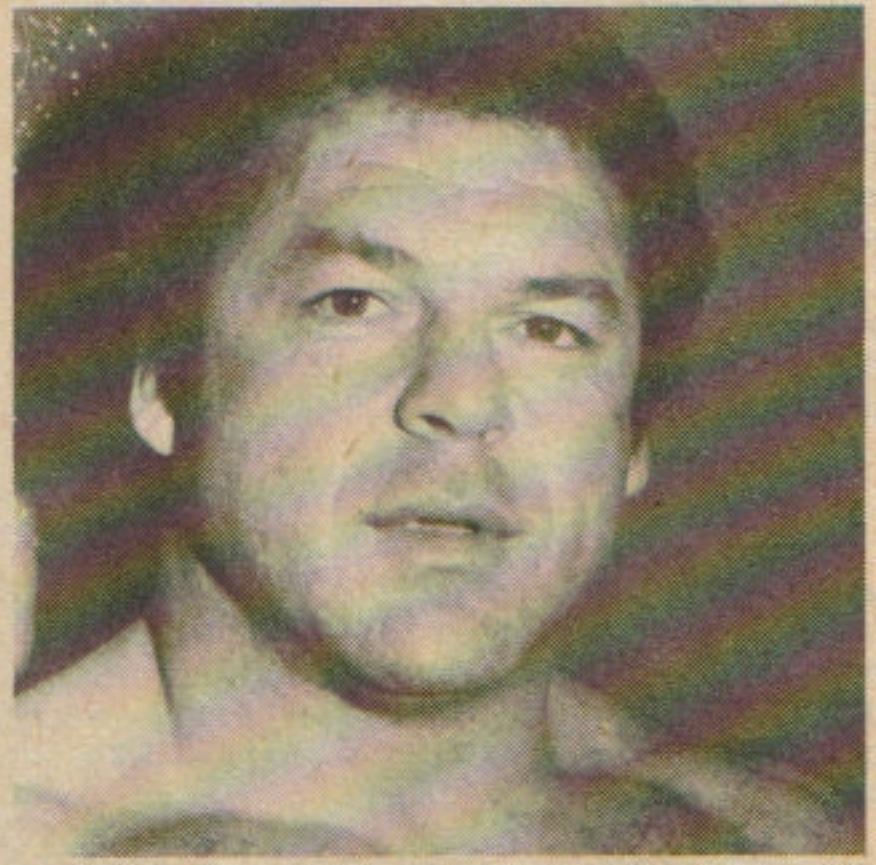
Koloff, it appeared as if that area would finally have a champion its fans could be proud of. Well, a lot of those fans have reason to be disappointed these days, as Steamboat has dropped the championship into the hands of Rowdy Roddy Piper. This is not to say that Piper does not have a legion of fans...he does. But during his short tenure as Mid-Atlantic champion, Steamboat characterized the title with enthusiasm and determination seldom seen in the squared circle. His attitude was highly admirable, and while Piper will no doubt reflect a similar level of enthusiasm, his regard for scientific attitudes is somewhat questionable. Rick Steamboat's loss of the title is a very tragic development.

A STAR IS BORN

Let's hear it for Ron Richie, Florida wrestling rookie supreme. A superb scientific grappler, Ron has made the difficult transition from amateur to professional with surprising ease and poise. He has already established a reputation in the Sunshine State that is unmatched by any

rookie anywhere. He is quickly working his way up the ladder, and it looks as if he will someday become a major national star. He is certainly off to an impressive start, and deserves to be watched closely over the coming months. If you haven't heard his name yet, pay close attention: you will, and quite often I'll wager. Ron Richie. Remember him.

POLISH POWER RETURNS



IVAN PUTSKI

Fans in the WWF region had better hold on to their seats! Polish Power is returning to the area in the form of none other than Ivan Putski, master of the infamous Polish hammer. Sources close to Putski maintain that the situation prevalent in the WWF at this time was the primary reason for his return. Apparently the proliferation of rulebreaking wrestlers was the paramount issue involved in Putski's decision. "Putski saw what was happening around here," said one aide of his, "and realized that Polish Power was the only way to remedy the situation." The return of Ivan Putski to the area will be most welcome.

A—ON—ASSIGNMENT

BY STEVEN FARHOOD



Apart from the rigorous, violent world of professional wrestling, Ric Flair faces the same problems as any other human being. The next few months could be very trying for the NWA champion.

MINNEAPOLIS IN early December. If winter is your season, this is heaven on ice. Good brandy. Good hockey (always take the North Stars and lay the goals). Fresh air. And some of the warmest people our country has to offer.

Ric Flair happens to be from Minneapolis, and while the NWA champion is anything but warm in the squared circle, I've always found him to be an intelligent, communicative person. Matt Brock sent me up here to spend a weekend with

Flair and describe him in his natural setting, away from the fans, the title challenges, and the pressures of being champion.

I learned a lot about Flair in two days. My knowledge, however, didn't come the way I had expected it to.

"Hello, Ric?" I began on the phone, moments after I checked into the Holiday Inn. "I just got in. Whatta you say we hit the tavern of your choice and swallow a few cold ones."

Flair answered in the kind of

voice that immediately translates into tragedy in any language.

"Steve," he whispered, "I can't believe what just happened. I got a call about two hours ago from the mother of an old and dear friend of mine, a guy I've known since childhood. He died in a car accident last night. He was only 32."

I tried to convince Flair that the best thing for me to do would be to take the next flight back to

(Continued on page 56)

If you wish to contribute to Shocket's mailbag, send your letters to:

TOP ROPE
Box 48
Rockville Centre, N.Y.
11571

OFF THE ROPE

By Dan Shocket

GUESS WHAT, GANG,
more Ted DiBiase jokes:

Q: Why would Ted DiBiase rather marry Olivia Newton-John than Farrah Fawcett?
A: He would rather have a john than a fawcett.

REGINA CAUDLE
Ardmore, OK

Q: What's the difference between Ted DiBiase and a bag of horse slobber?

A: The bag.
Q: What are Ted DiBiase's favorite maneuvers?
A: A broken neck and being pinned.

JEFF & DAVE KENDALL
Toccoa, GA

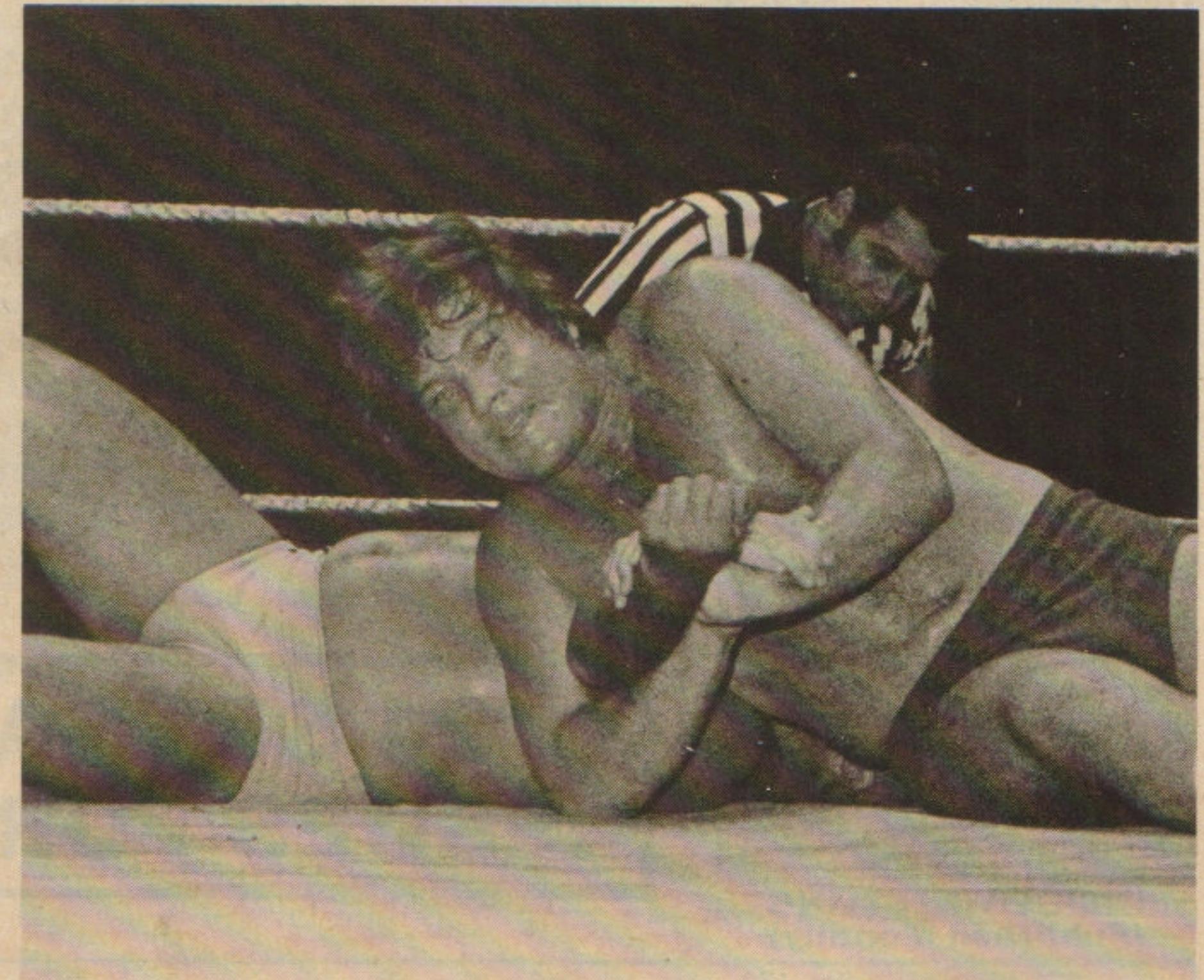
And now, onto those with a differing opinion.

Dear Mr. Shocket,

My name is Becky Lehner, but you can just call me "wormslime," since that's what you call a devout fan of Ted DiBiase.

I don't think that's exactly fair of you to call me names when I'm not there to rank you.

I think deep down you are a big fan of Ted. You can deny it, but since he seems to be the



I only regret that I do not have more space to print the hundreds of Ted DiBiase jokes that have flooded my mailbag. I hope you enjoy them. If you object to the jokes or anything else I write, simply turn to page 22. I don't care.

brunt of all your jokes, I can only assume you have a concealed respect for him. I'm quite upset about the way you make fun of him, however.

I'm not going to call you any names, though. In my opinion, any "grown man" who makes up simple, meaningless jokes

upon an innocent party is not only mean, but cannot have a very high I.Q.

This doesn't necessarily refer to you, but I'm 16, and I told immature jokes like that in first grade.

REBECCA JEAN LEHNER
Lawrenceville, GA

Dear Ms. Lehner,

I would be most happy to ignore Ted DiBiase, but his vocal fans make it impossible. Therefore, I find it necessary to bring him down to the level on which he should grovel. As for trying to interpret my real motivations, the person doing that should be a psychiatrist. Anyone else comes off sounding like a simplistic Pollyanna. I'm not necessarily referring to you, but I stopped trying to ignore reality with fantastic theories in first grade.

Dear Mr. Shocket,

I have been reading *Pro Wrestling Illustrated* for a couple of months. When I read your column you are always putting down the good guys and giving praise to the bad guys.

I have one question for you: Why? You put in your column a reference to Morons for Steamboat, Cretins for Rich, and now you're doing Ted DiBiase jokes. All I want to know is why. I like all three guys.

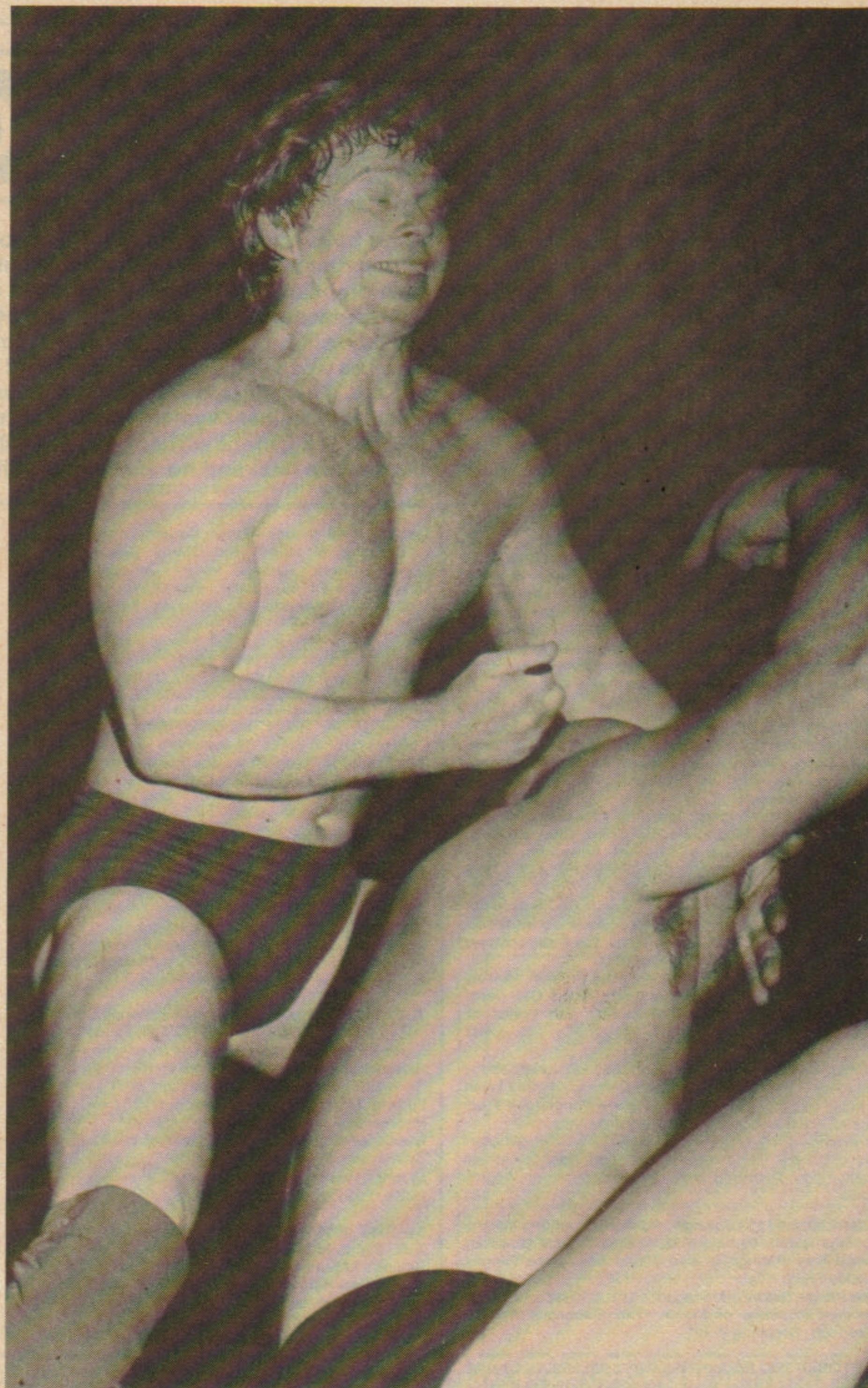
DONNA PARKER
Gaffney, SC

Dear Ms. Parker,

Now that I know you like all three guys, I'm certainly going to reconsider my opinion. The facts that these three can't wrestle, are constantly unsuccessful, and are as exciting to watch as sunset in a coal mine, that can't be all the story, can it? Upon reflection, I realize their incompetence, cowardice, and clumsiness is the entire story. I have reconsidered my opinion, and I was right in the first place. My clubs are still open. I assume you wish to join.

Dear Mr. Shocket,

All right, so you don't like Bob Backlund. The least you could



Now there's a man who wrestles by the rules, a man the fans can look up to as their champion. C'mon people, Backlund is punching Killer Khan in the back of the head!

do is give him some credit.

He has beaten all the top contenders such as: King Kong Mosca, Stan Hansen, Sgt. Slaughter, George Steele, Killer Khan, and Magnificent Muraco. Greg Valentine will also go down to defeat.

Bob Backlund is the best champion in the world today. So, why don't you give credit

where credit is due, or shut the hell up!

DON HYLVA
Mt. Pleasant, NY

Dear Mr. Hylva,

I have always given Backlund credit for bribing referees, toadying to the commissioners, and fooling the fans. At those three skills, he is surely the best in the world today. □

***** WRESTLING *****

ENQUIRER

RICH THREATENS NWA WITH COURT ACTION

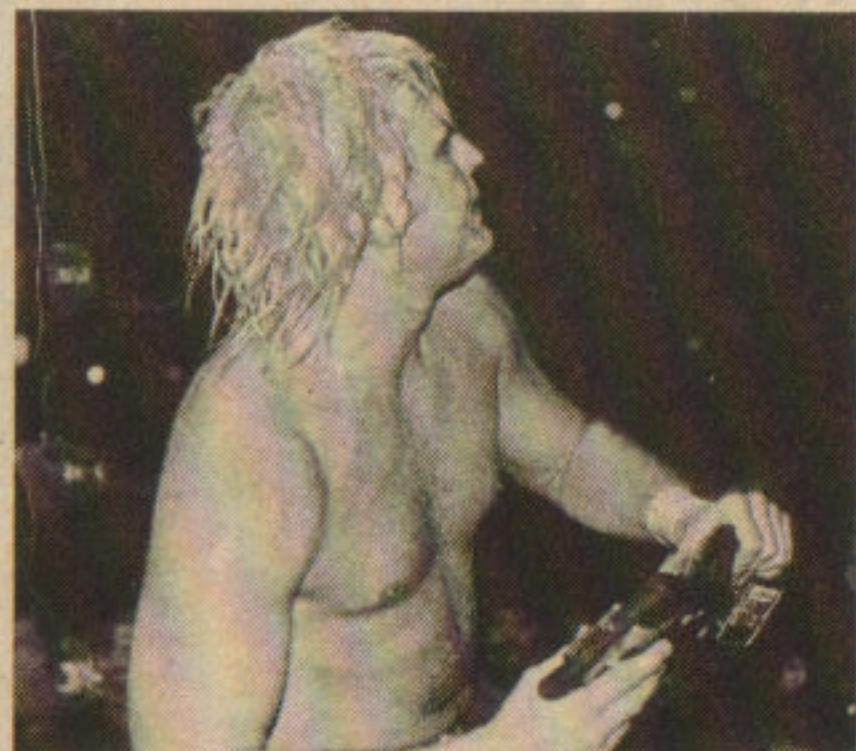
Seeks To Be Proclaimed NWA Champ

BY PETER KING

ATLANTA, GA—Although he defeated Ric Flair, Tommy Rich has not been awarded the NWA belt. He threatens to take the matter to court, forcing the NWA to reverse its decision.

The controversy occurred during a scheduled match between Ric Flair and Dusty Rhodes. During the introductions, Great Kabuki rushed into the ring, breathing his deadly green fog into Rhodes' face and blinding him. With Rhodes unable to wrestle, Rich substituted for him and went on to defeat Flair.

According to NWA regulations, however, Flair did not



Tommy Rich departs the ring with the NWA belt that would soon be confiscated by Alliance officials.

lose his title because he had never contracted to wrestle Rich for the belt. Rich feels he deserves to be champion and is considering suing the NWA to proclaim him champion.

DIBIASE STUNS ORNDORFF FOR NORTH AMERICAN TITLE

BY MATT BROCK

NEW ORLEANS, LA—Ted DiBiase is once again the North American champion. His stunning defeat of Paul Orndorff for the belt was greeted with a five-minute standing ovation from the capacity crowd which had supported the popular challenger from the opening bell.

DiBiase displayed a whirlwind of scientific tactics, keeping the aggressive-minded Orndorff constantly off balance. The match seemed to be decided during its late stages, when DiBiase clearly showed he was in better shape.

"I trained very hard for this match," said DiBiase. "The bout had an hour time limit, but I felt like I was in shape to go four, five

hours if necessary. At any rate, I'm glad to get the belt back. The fans know I'll wear it with pride."

Orndorff felt his rough championship schedule helped to defeat him. "I've been wrestling five and six times a week," said the ex-champion. "I've got bumps, bruises, and maybe even a torn ligament in my leg. Sure DiBiase was in better shape tonight. The guy's been taking a light schedule recently. Now, I'll just let him get a little run down. In a couple of weeks, I'll easily get the belt back."

Among the top contenders for DiBiase's title are Ernie Ladd, Dusty Rhodes, Bob Roop, and Bob Orton Jr. "No one said being champion is easy," said DiBiase.

Thornton Regains NWA Jr. Belt

BY STU SAKS

KNOXVILLE, TN—NWA junior heavyweight champion Jerry Brisco has been dethroned by Les Thornton, the man from whom Brisco won the belt three months ago. The scientific-minded Brisco seemed surprised by Thornton's rulebreaking onslaught.

"The guy usually doesn't begin to cheat until about five or six minutes into the match," said a dejected Brisco. "I was stupid. I didn't expect him to start rulebreaking as soon as the bell rang. In this sport you've got to be prepared for anything. I wasn't."

Thornton, meanwhile, was not apologetic about his ring behavior. "Is Brisco crying again?" asked the new champion. "Look, I took a calculated risk. I was going for the belt, sure I was very aggressive. There's a referee, you know. He could have disqualified me at any time. Apparently, I couldn't have been doing all that much illegal."

There was no rematch clause in the contract. "It looks like Jerry's



Stunning Jerry Brisco with his aggressive tactics, Les Thornton recaptured the NWA junior heavyweight title.

forced to the back of the line," said Thornton. "Now, he's just another contender who has to prove he deserves a title shot."

Veteran Promoter Sam Muchnick Retires

BY BILL APTER

ST. LOUIS, MO—Sam Muchnick has announced his retirement after 36 years as a promoter and a 50-year involvement with professional wrestling.

Muchnick is a beloved figure and will be sorely missed. Fans in St. Louis will especially miss the man who has the ability to make the best matches possible.

Patera and Hogan Expected To Clash Soon

BY CRAIG PETERS

Minneapolis, MN—Sources close to the AWA offices declare that Ken Patera and Hulk Hogan are close to signing a contract for a match.

Wrestling fans all over the world have been waiting expectantly for a meeting between these powerful superstars, perhaps the strongest men in wrestling. The sources insist the match will be a reality in the near future, although they are not at liberty to disclose the already determined date and place.

Snuka-Albano Alliance Feared Near

BY STEVE FARHOOD

NEW YORK, NY—By the time you read this, chances are good that Lou Albano will be managing Jimmy Snuka in the WWF area. Sources close to the pair reveal that only minor details must be worked out before Snuka is under contract to Albano.

Snuka, a feared rulebreaker known for his flying tactics, should prove a dangerous rulebreaker when under Albano's guidance. Sources say Albano believes Snuka will be the manager's first WWF champion since Ivan Koloff in 1971.

AROUND THE GLOBE

ATLANTA, GA

His suspension lifted, The Masked Superstar is now permitted to wrestle once again in the United States. While in Japan, Superstar claims to have perfected a maneuver that will eliminate Tommy Rich from wrestling forever.

TORONTO, ONT.

Over 16,000 fans jammed Maple Leaf Gardens to see NWA champion Ric Flair battle former champion Harley Race on the 50th anniversary of wrestling at the famed sports arena. Flair won a controversial decision.

TAMPA, FL

Florida champion Spoiler says that he is not worried about a challenge from Southern champion Jack Brisco. Though he has no proof, Spoiler claims that he has wrestled and defeated Jack at least 100 times in the past—pinfalls every time.

MINNEAPOLIS, MN

Hulk Hogan has once again offered Nick Bockwinkel a "winner takes the entire purse" match if only Bockwinkel will put his AWA title on the line. Bockwinkel, along with manager Bobby Heenan, has turned down Hogan's offer.

Every issue, three reporters from PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED will participate in an incisive press conference with a top wrestling star. The questions will be demanding. And the answers will reveal the innermost thoughts of the giants of the sport

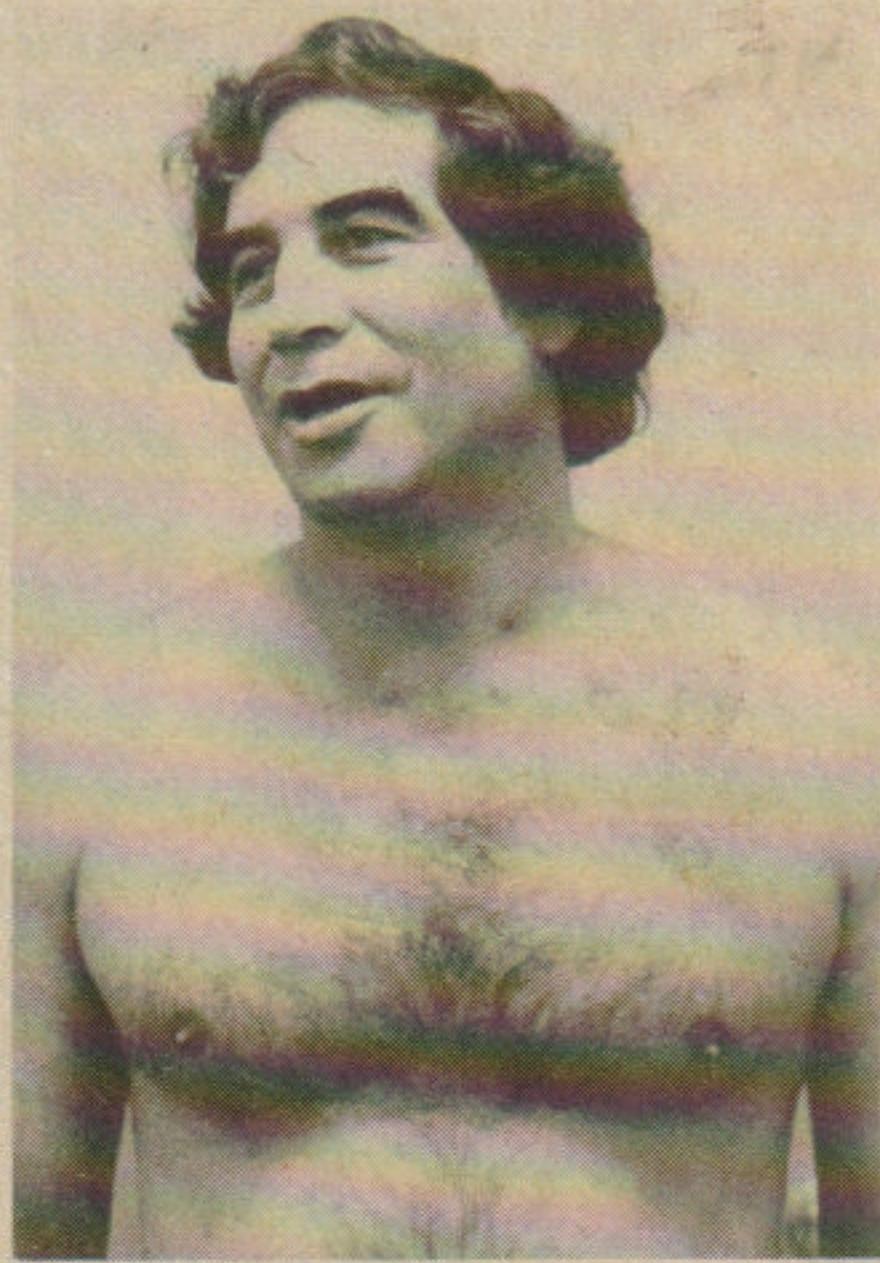
**PRESS
CONFERENCE**

JACK BRISCO



(Jack Brisco is on the move again. Many observers had written him off when he lost the NWA championship to Terry Funk in 1975. After a few slow years, Brisco has rebounded with a startling array of victories and titles to once again become a prime contender for the championship spot now occupied by Ric Flair. Editor-in-Chief Peter King, along with Associate Editors Stu Saks and Craig Peters, discuss Brisco's future plans for NWA domination).

"... my career never declined at all, and I've never wrestled better in my life than I'm wrestling today ... If you're good, you'll be back up front eventually."



PETER KING: First of all, Jack, let me welcome you to our "Press Conference."

JACK BRISCO: Thank you, Peter. You know, I've been doing a lot of interviews lately, mostly on television, and I find that the first thing most people want to ask me about is how I lost the NWA title to Terry Funk way back in '75.

KING: Well, that wasn't the *first* thing, but I was hoping to . . .

BRISCO: Let me tell you right now that Terry Funk was lucky, he caught me on a bad night, and 999 times out of 1,000 I could obliterate that poor fool given a fair chance. Why, he's almost as feeble as his brother Dory Jr. I'll never understand how those two clowns manage to keep going in a sport that is this tough and this demanding.

That's all I want to say about Funk.

STU SAKS: Okay, let's pick things up after that match between you and Terry. According to a lot of people, your career lost its momentum pretty quickly, now . . .

BRISCO: That's according to other people. According to me, my career never declined at all, and I've never wrestled better in my life than I'm wrestling lately.

SAKS: Well, that's what I was going to ask you about. You've picked up a lot of regional titles lately, winning the Missouri title from Ted DiBiase and the Southern title from Bobby Jaggers.

BRISCO: That's right, that's very observant. It's kind of like having to go to the end of the line when you lose a major title like that. But if you're good,

you'll be back up front eventually. The Missouri title was a very important step in my comeback. DiBiase was a valiant wrestler, who is very close to winning a world title. Now, of course, I'm the Southern champion, and I hold half the North American Tag Team title along with Jerry.

CRAIG PETERS: . . . and of course Jerry is the NWA junior heavyweight champion . . .

BRISCO: That's right. He's great, my little brother is. You know, too many people have put him down, haven't given him enough credit for being as good a wrestler as he is. Hell, man, if he wasn't a good wrestler he wouldn't be the junior heavyweight champ, now would he? And he keeps getting better all the time.

KING: What about the new



"... Do you think Flair will give me a title shot now that he has the belt, and knowing what I did to him before? Hell, no!"

heavyweight champ, Ric Flair? What do you think of him?

BRISCO: Not much. I pinned him, you know. Yeah, not too long before he got lucky with Rhodes, I pinned Ric Flair to the ground. Now there isn't anyone in the world who's

gonna tell me that Ric Flair can improve his style and strategies so quickly that I wouldn't be able to pin him again given the chance. But do you think Flair will give me a title shot now that he has the belt, and knowing what I did to him before? Hell,

no! You better believe that if he does give me a shot at the belt, it'll be after a lot of pressure from the fans, and not because he wants to!

SAKS: But as Southern champ, you have to keep an eye on a belt of your own against challenges.

BRISCO: Sure do. There are people down here who would do just about anything for a chance to buckle that Southern honor around their waist. Take The Spoiler, for instance. That man has absolutely no scruples whatsoever. He's a helluva customer, and if you plan to tangle with him, you'd better be well prepared.

PETERS: Do you find yourself experiencing any kind of doubt when you have to go up against someone like The Spoiler?

BRISCO: Well, I can see where a rookie trying to last the time limit with a maniac like Spoiler could completely lose himself because of nerves? Me? I'm too experienced, too well trained. I'm not afraid of anybody or anything when I step into that ring. If you're going to be a champion, that's the kind of attitude you have to work on developing. It's not recklessness, but it's a healthy disregard for anyone else's abilities coming close to matching your own. Build up that attitude, and you've got half the battle won.

KING: I suppose you know what you're talking about, being half the North American championship tag team, and being Southern champion.

BRISCO: You bet. And don't forget soon-to-be NWA champion again!

KING: All right! Jack, thanks for being with us here on the "Press Conference."

BRISCO: My pleasure. □

WHAT THEY ARE SAYING

Every month, our reporters will compile wrestlers' most revealing quotes. Often catching the grapplers with their guards down, our reporters will work endlessly in obtaining interesting quotes on a variety of subjects

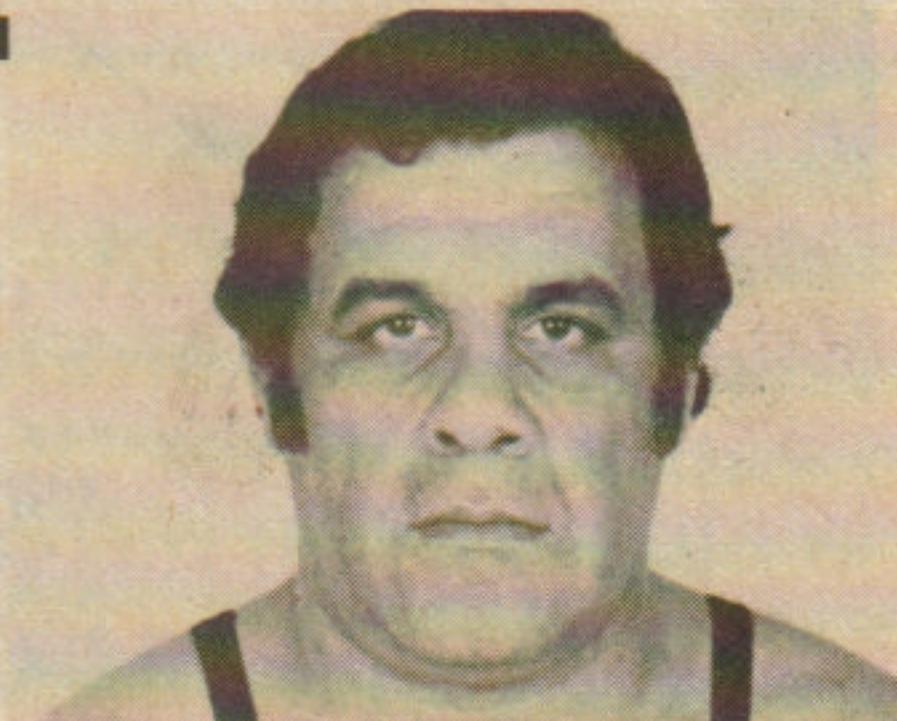
MIL MASCARAS

"I'm proud to be involved in the sport of professional wrestling. Unfortunately, there are too many men in this sport who either take the rules too lightly, or think that they can get away with things in the ring that are blatantly wrong and potentially crippling. As long as I'm around, they won't get away with anything."



KING KONG MOSCA

"Patterson deserved what was coming to him. He's supposed to be an announcer, right? Announcers are supposed to be impartial, right? Well, nobody is gonna tell me that what Patterson did and said was impartial, you know? Yeah, Patterson deserves everything that's coming to him, and if I had the chance I'd do it again . . . only more next time."



ROCKY JOHNSON

"Those two dudes, Roddy Piper and Ivan Koloff, are no question the two men I hate most in this sport. They are worthless stains on the face of professional wrestling, and both men should be thrown out of the sport altogether. They are worthless filth, and if I have any say about it, they won't last much longer."



TED DIBIASE

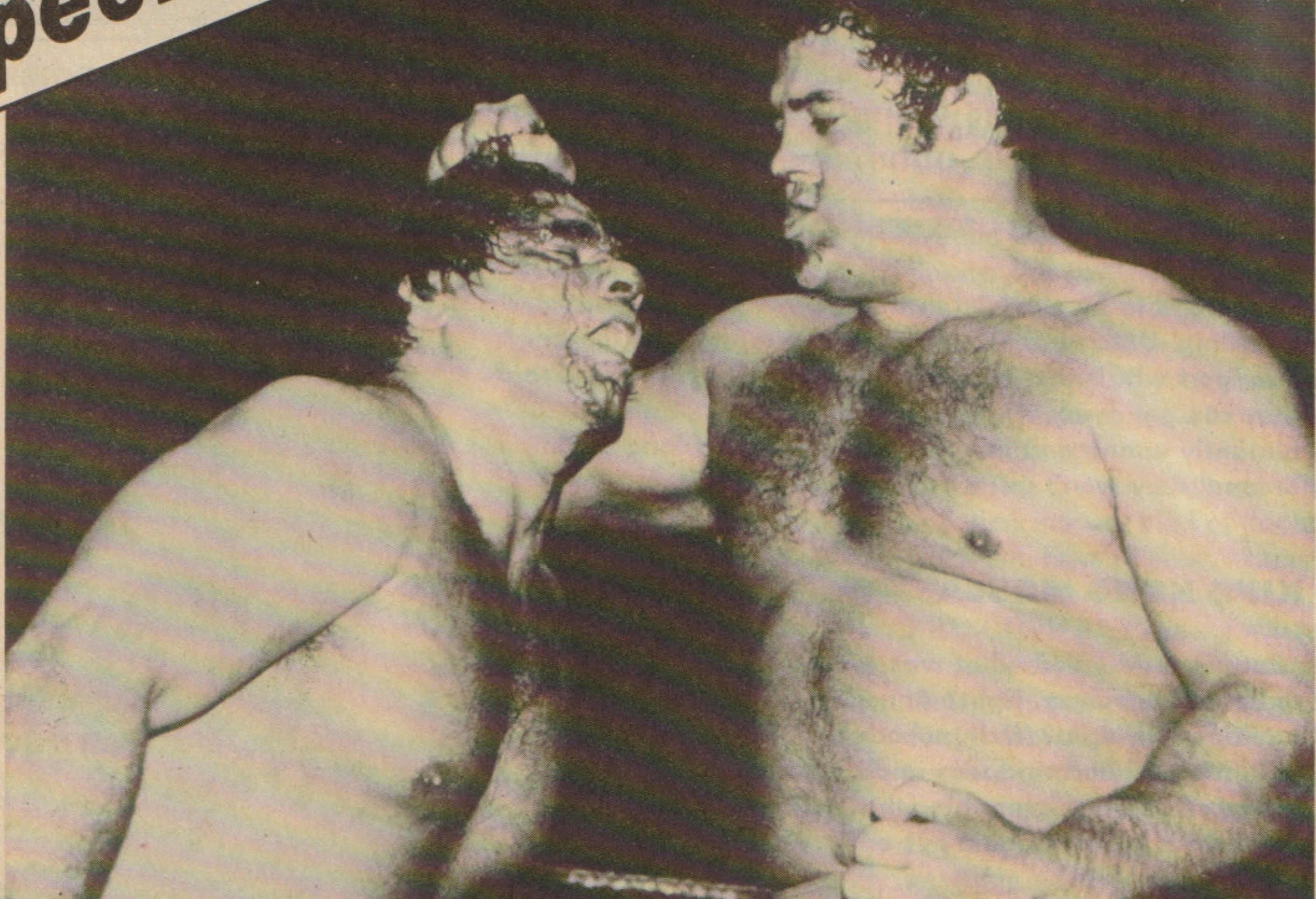
"I'm proud to be the North American champion, and I enjoy wrestling down here in the New Orleans and Mississippi area. It's unfortunate, though, that this wonderful area of the country has to have such a scourge as Bob Orton Jr. infesting it. I'm going to stick in this place until it is cleansed of this kind of contemptible slime."



(Continued on page 50)

Special Editorial

(Editor's Note: Just before this magazine went to press, Pedro Morales dethroned Magnificent Muraco at Madison Square Garden in another bloody war. The Intercontinental belt may be around a different waist, but there seems no end to the mindless brutality that this terrible feud has come to represent.)



WE DEMAND THE MURACO-MORALES WARS BE STOPPED

WE CAN'T ACCEPT this situation anymore. Violence in wrestling is one thing. Excessive sadism and brutality is another thing altogether. The battle now raging furiously over Magnificent Muraco's Intercontinental belt must be halted, or else serious consequences will result.

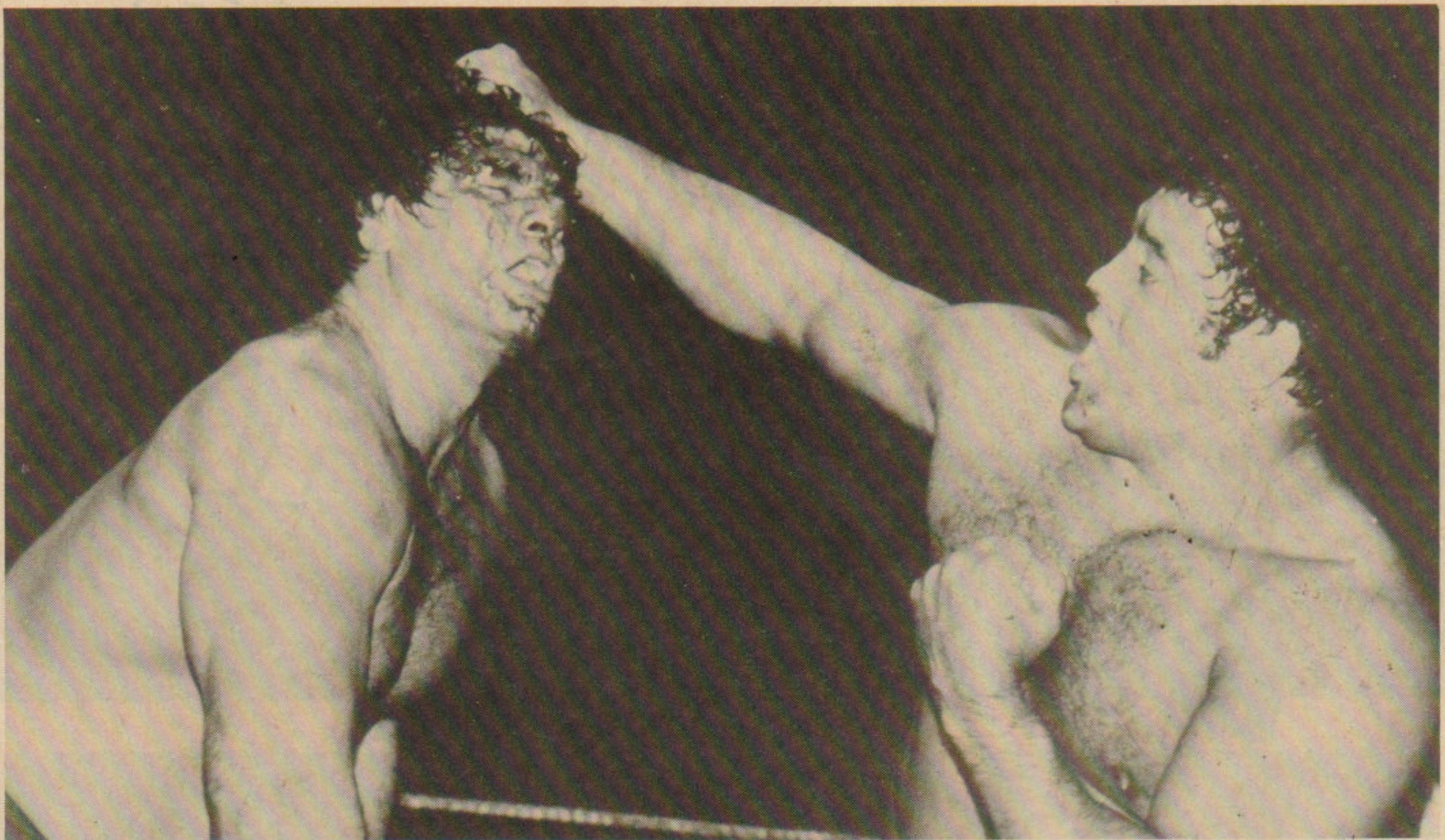
The most recent meeting

between Muraco and number-one challenger to the Intercontinental throne, Pedro Morales, developed into a bloody melee the likes of which haven't been seen in Madison Square Garden for a very long time.

Muraco came into the ring with his manager, The Grand Wizard, displaying an arrogance

that far surpasses anything we've ever seen from him. Is this arrogance real, or simply a put-on to enrage the fans and psyche-out opponents?

We must digress a moment and ask this all-important question. As you all know, Wizard and Muraco have been involved in what the Wizard called "an impeccably designed



After breaking open Muraco's face by slamming his head into the steel barrier outside the ring, Morales goes right after the Intercontinental champion's open wound. Muraco appears to be out on his feet.

Pedro Morales was out for more than Magnificent Muraco's Intercontinental belt when the two grapplers met in Madison Square Garden . . . he was out for blood, and he got it. Muraco is now calling for revenge. He may get that as well. The brewing war threatens to destroy them both

five-year plan." It had been publicly stated that the object of this plan was Bob Backlund and his WWF championship belt.

Lately, however, it appears as if the plan has collapsed. Two major title matches in Madison Square Garden against Backlund ended in a one-hour time limit draw and a controversial victory for Backlund, respectively.

Yet all indications seem to point to the fact that five years is not up yet. Does Muraco's arrogance stem from the fact that there is much more chaos yet to come, or is the plan truly aborted? His attitude against Morales proved that there is no ambivalence, that one of these alternatives is surely true . . . but as to which one it is, no other

clue was offered.

In any event, Muraco was on fire that night . . . and it was up to Pedro Morales to extinguish that raging inferno.

A man of Pedro's skill and experience should have been able to outmaneuver a brawler like Muraco. Indeed, he was able to avoid the Asiatic spike that Muraco enjoys applying to opponents' windpipes. He escaped many of the leglocks that Muraco is famous for. He did, however, make one fatal error.

Ancient Greek philosophers called it *hubris*. Simply stated, it means overstepping one's bounds; going too far.

Pedro Morales went too far for
(Continued on page 66)



With blood streaming into his eyes, Muraco was in no condition to continue the match. The referee wisely halted the slaughter.

LOOKING AT . . .

Matt Brock:



WHY, I REMEMBER when Mr. Wrestling II was invited to the President's home! Hell, I'd better, since it wasn't that long ago. Only about four years, really. Remember that? Jimmy Carter was in the White House, and Miz Lillian was in Plains, Georgia, hosting none other than the masked II. Miz Lillian was, and I guess still is, a big wrestling fan. According to my old friend Paul Pressley, Mr. Wrestling II is one of her favorites.

The reason I bring it up here is that I find it hard to come up with the name of another grappler who deserves that kind of an honor more than Mr. Wrestling II. I certainly can't see Miss Lillian inviting Sgt. Slaughter over for tea, or playing a game of shuffleboard with George Steele . . . hell, Steele would probably eat the shuffle pucks, and then go after the peanut warehouse.

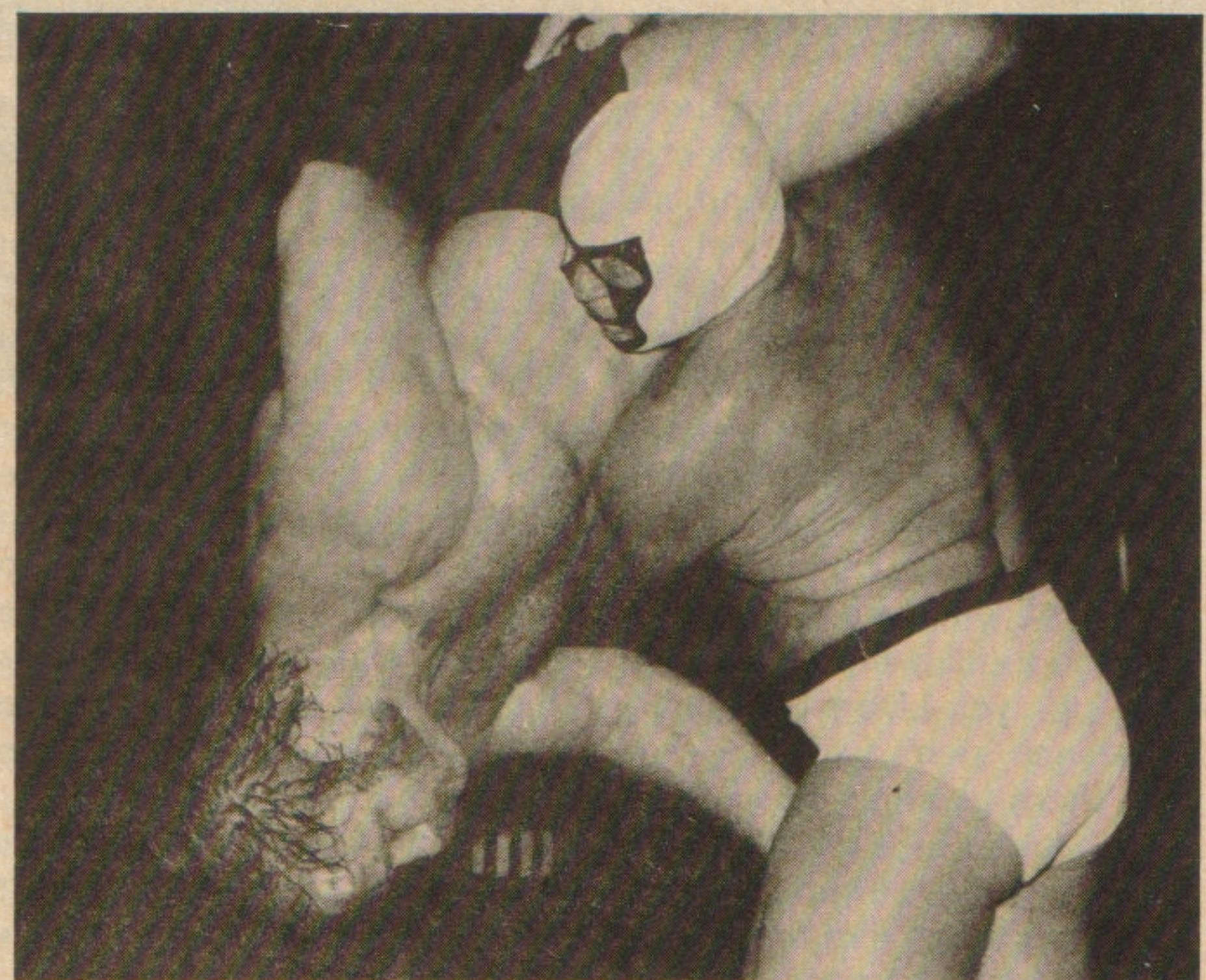
But Mr. Wrestling II: now there's a man for the record books. Decency is his hallmark, and he wears it for all to see as clearly as the mask which hides his mysterious features. I've never known him to go off the deep end,

though I must admit I was a little worried a couple of months back when he decided to run the rest of those southern men through a little mind game test. You can question his tactics, maybe, but his results are amazing.

Oh, and stylistically? Sure, there are other wrestlers who are a lot

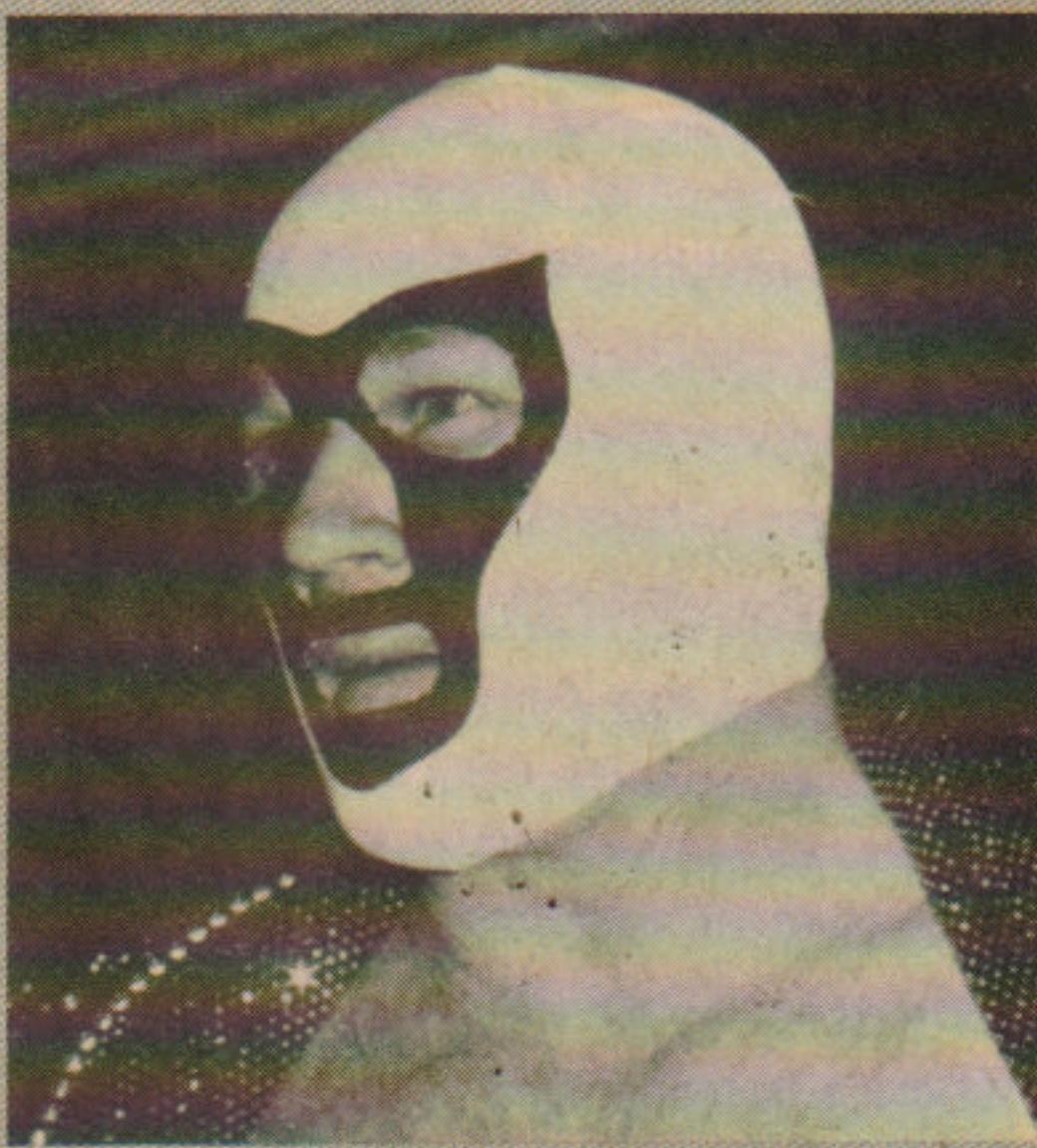
flashier. Most of them, actually. Among hooded wrestlers, just about anyone from Mil Mascaras on down the ranks can out-razzmatazz Mr. Wrestling II. But when it comes down to brass tacks, I think I'd rather have II in my corner than anyone else.

Consistency is the name of the



Mr. Wrestling II is just a good man who wouldn't think of hurting an opponent anymore than is necessary for victory.

MR. WRESTLING II



Wrestling II's fans are loyal to their favorite and he is loyal to them. II receives a touching plaque and sketch from a fan (above) and takes the time to sign autographs (above right).

game here, and there is nobody who can come close to matching the steadiness with which II addresses his opposition. You know, a lot of these flashy guys start strong then lose their breath and momentum 10 minutes into the match. That's the last thing you'll find happening to Mr. Wrestling II.

Out of the ring as well, II is a man who places his high moral standards above everything else. I remember a case where I was driving with him in a car and we

passed a school. These two kids were going at it pretty well, and the bigger of the two was beginning to stomp on the other one like he was fantasizing being Killer Khan. Well, II stopped the car, broke up the fight, and talked with these two kids for about 10 minutes. I don't know what he said 'cause I was waiting in the car for him, but what I do know is that those two kids walked away friends. They were laughing with each other and before you knew it, they started shooting hoops together.



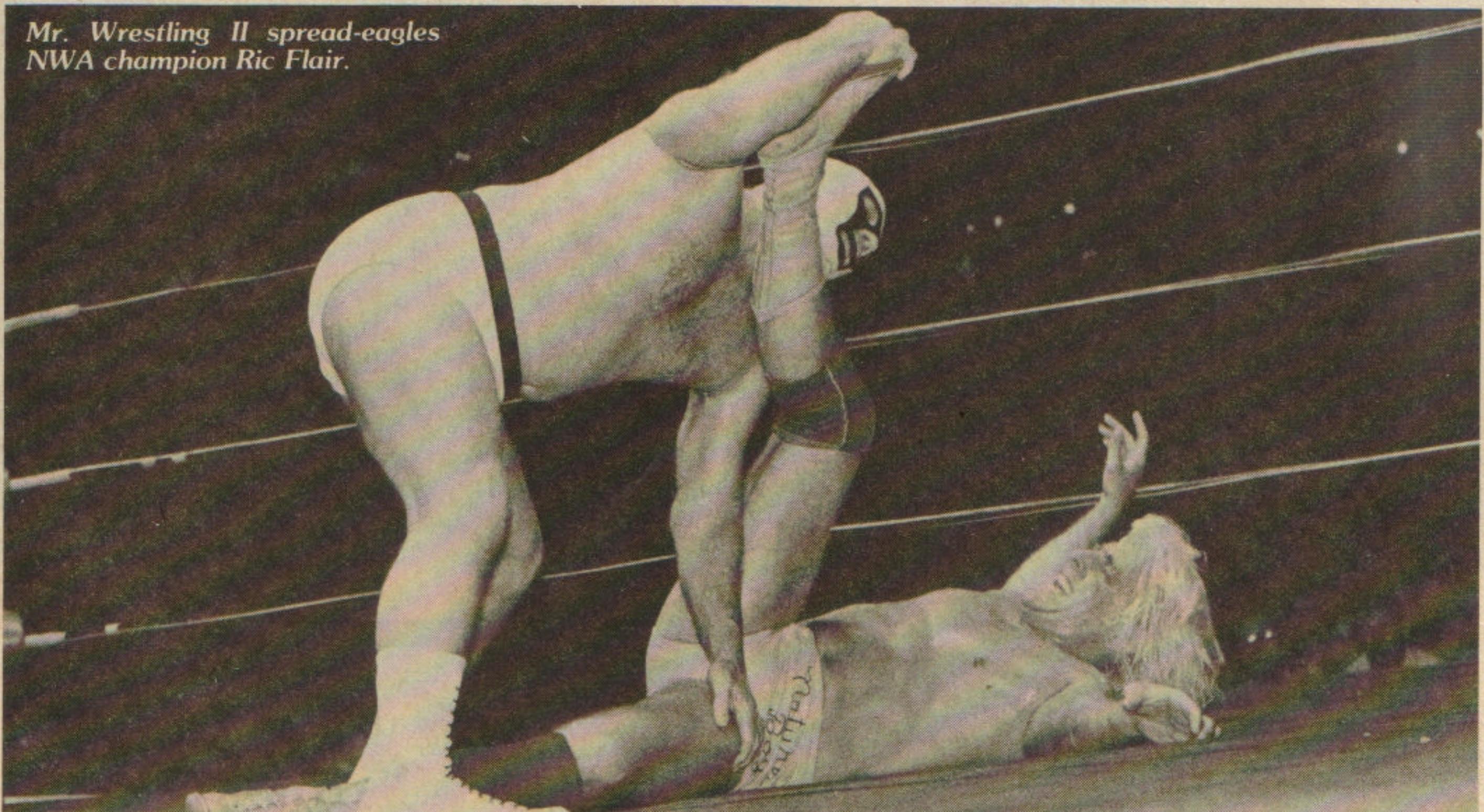
That's selflessness, and II's got it to spare.

When you see him enter the ring, feel proud for the man in the mask, and respect him. He deserves it.

Oh yeah, before I sign off this month, I want to thank Steve Farhood, handicapper extraordinaire, for his New York's Day picks . . . I guess you won't have to buy that extra parka for Mongolia after all, Steve! Give yourself a few more runs of winners like that, and you'll make something of yourself someday, kid. In fact, you may want to try handicapping the mat wars someday . . . Backdoor Huey could use the competition. □

Will RIC FLAIR Ever Learn

*Mr. Wrestling II spread-eagles
NWA champion Ric Flair.*



YOU CAN'T HUMILIATE LEGENDS LIKE MR. WRESTLING II

MR. WRESTLING II crumpled the newspaper in his strong hands and flung it to the floor. He got up from his seat and began to pace. Under the white mask his face was flushed red.

"How can one athlete say things like that about

another athlete?" II shouted. As his pacing took him near the crumpled newspaper, II kicked the tabloid with a savagery that almost tore it in two. The paper landed against a far wall in the dressing room, open to the page which had offended II.

"Flair Charges II Is 'Senile

Old Man,'" screamed the headline.

"Just take a look at this crap," said II, picking up the newspaper and offering it to his visitor. "Read it. And then tell me that that scum is a champion."

The story was perhaps the
(Continued on page 63)

Before the match, Ric Flair's words cut into Mr. Wrestling II like razor blades. For some reason, the NWA champion felt the need to humiliate Georgia's biggest legend. But during the match, Flair discovered that his hateful words had been turned by II into a fuel of brutality. The champion was lucky to escape with his belt . . . and his life

PHOTOS BY EMMY YATES

— *Your Votes Are In* —

SPECIAL YEAR-END AWARDS TO THE WORLD'S GREATEST WRESTLERS!

IT'S COMPLETELY ASTOUNDING. We knew that there would be some sort of a response, but we never dreamed that it would be this strong! More than 50,000 ballots have been received, sorted, and tabulated. The count is in, and the winners have been chosen by you, the fans.

As you will discover by scanning the following pages, some of the results are as surprising as others were expected. Tag Team of the Year, for example. We never expected to see Tony Garea and Rick Martel get edged out of the top spot by The Freebirds . . . if anyone, we thought Mr. Fuji and Mr. Saito might be able to unseat the former champions, but Albano's latest team came in a shocking third place! Many of the other categories offer similar surprises as well.

In the past, many award winners have recognized the value of these awards. This

year is no exception. Inspirational Wrestler of the Year for 1981 Bob Backlund noted that "it's important to know how the fans feel about the wrestlers, and this annual vote gives us a chance to know where we stand with the fans."

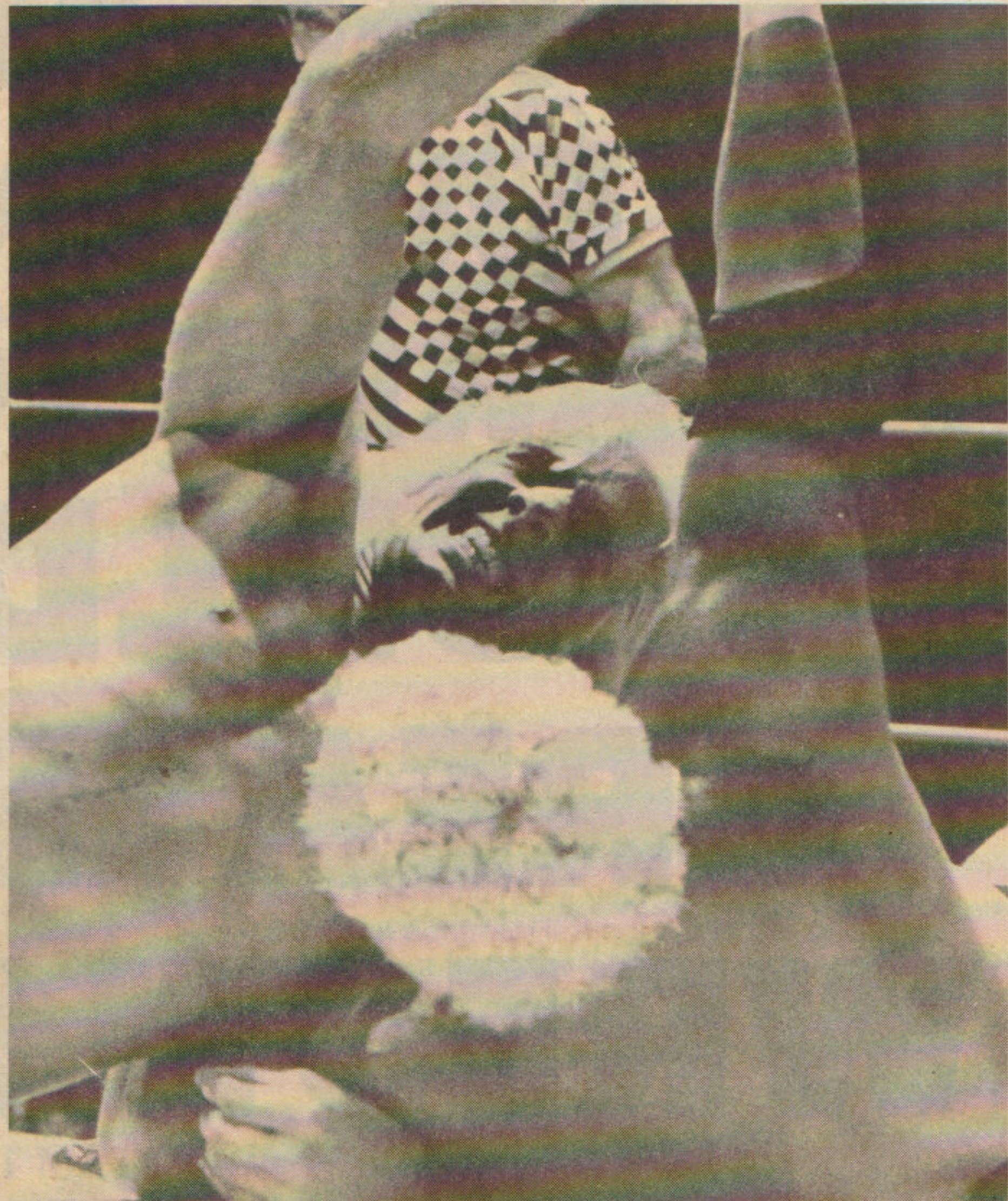
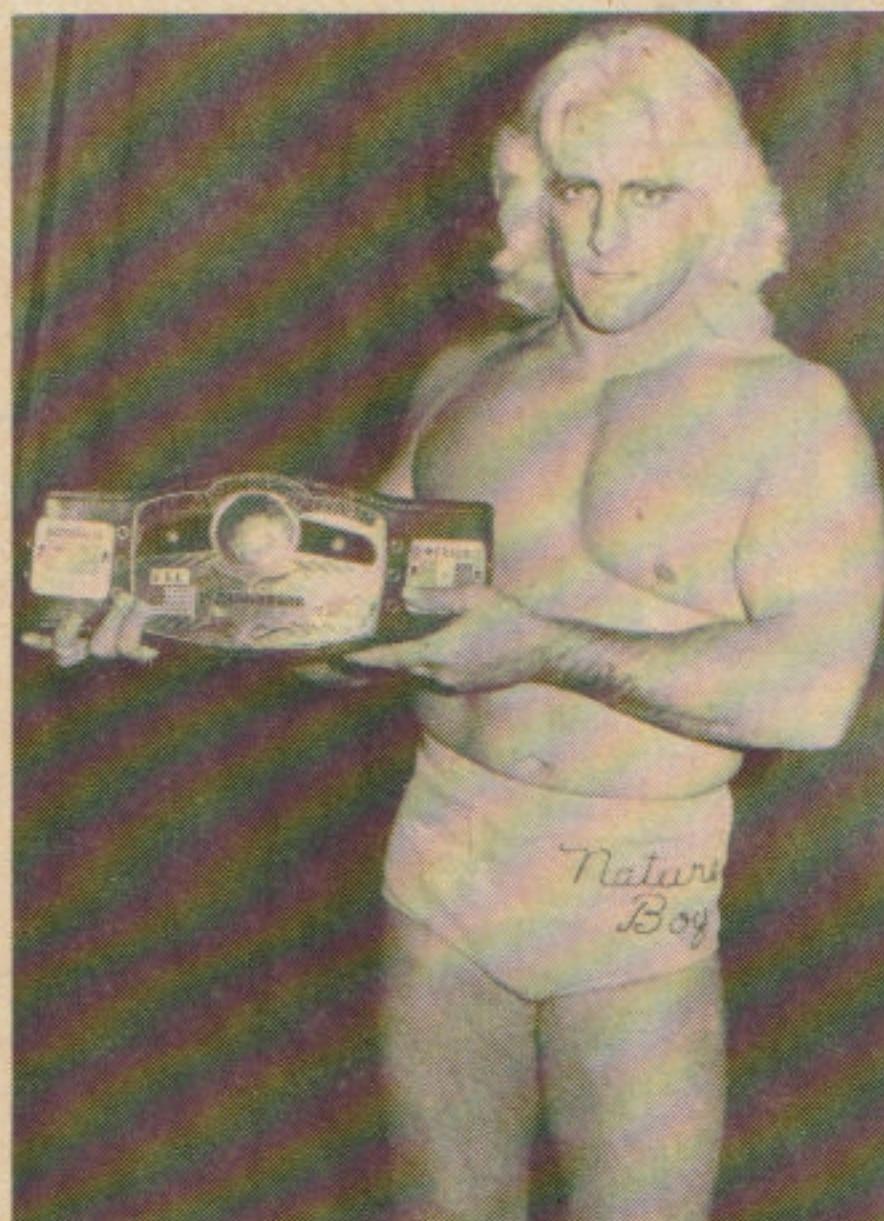
One final statement must be made before directing our attention to the individual awards. The editors of *Pro Wrestling Illustrated* would like to thank each and every one of you who took the time to cast your ballot. Your efforts are appreciated. For those of you who didn't vote: Just look at how close some of the results were, and think about the thousands of others who didn't cast their votes as well. We hope to hear from all of you next year.

Our hearty congratulations to all the winners, and special acknowledgements go to the runners up.

Now—on to the awards!

WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

Ric Flair



THE HONOR OF Wrestler of the Year is the most coveted of all the fan awards. Talent in literally every aspect of the sport is required to capture this honor, and the top four finishers reflect about as much mat expertise as is humanly possible. Leading the field was NWA champion Ric Flair.

"I suppose a lot of people were impressed with my win over Dusty Rhodes to snag the championship belt," said Flair. "Well, they should have been. It was a great match, and I think it really showed me at my finest."

Indeed, many of the 18,451 people voting for Flair included some additional comments citing Flair's successful challenge against Dusty Rhodes' title, but many others as well mentioned that Flair had been a consistently fine

wrestler all through the year.

WWF champion Bob Backlund was last year's winner in this category, and he received more than 12,000 votes to come in second.

"I can't always agree with Flair's tactics in the ring," admitted Backlund, "but I must say he certainly displayed some

impressive skill all year. I offer him my congratulations."

Tommy Rich, who captured the top honors in the Most Popular Wrestler of the Year category (see page 42) finished third in the Wrestler of the Year slot.

"Both me and Flair are blond," joked Rich, "and maybe some fans thought Flair was me and voted for him instead. But seriously, I thank the people for my third-place finish."

Former NWA titleholder Dusty Rhodes, who lost his belt to Flair, came in fourth.

"I'm surprised Flair won," said Rhodes. "The guy became NWA champion with a cheap victory." □

WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

RIC FLAIR
Bob Backlund
Tommy Rich
Dusty Rhodes
Others

VOTES

18,451
12,366
9,432
6,990
4,908

MATCH OF THE YEAR

Andre vs. Killer Khan

AS GREAT AS 1980 was for superstar matches, 1981 was even better!

Titles changed hands, brutal challenges were met with even more fervent defenses, feuds sizzled and burned their way across the nation and the globe . . . and revenge topped the list.

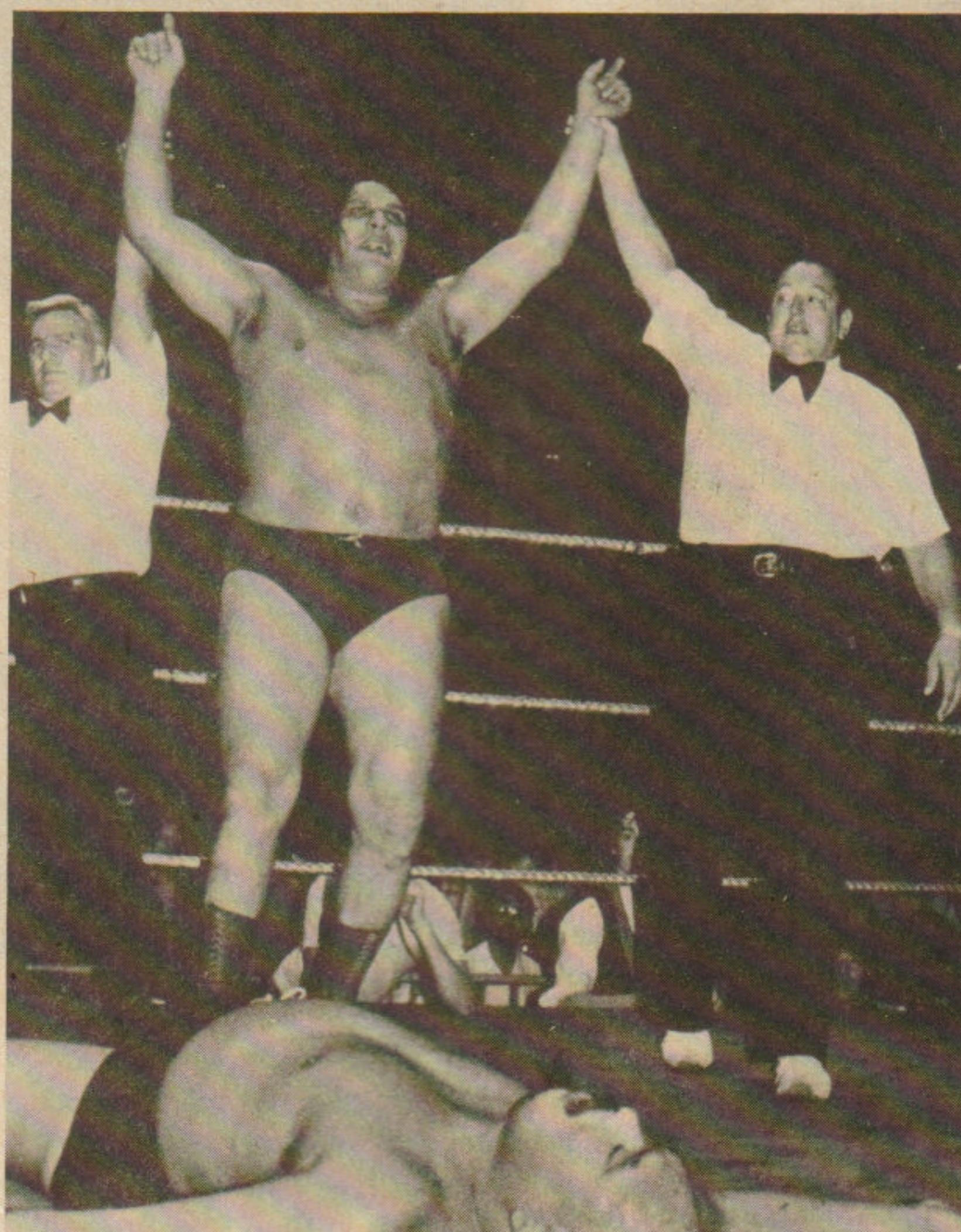
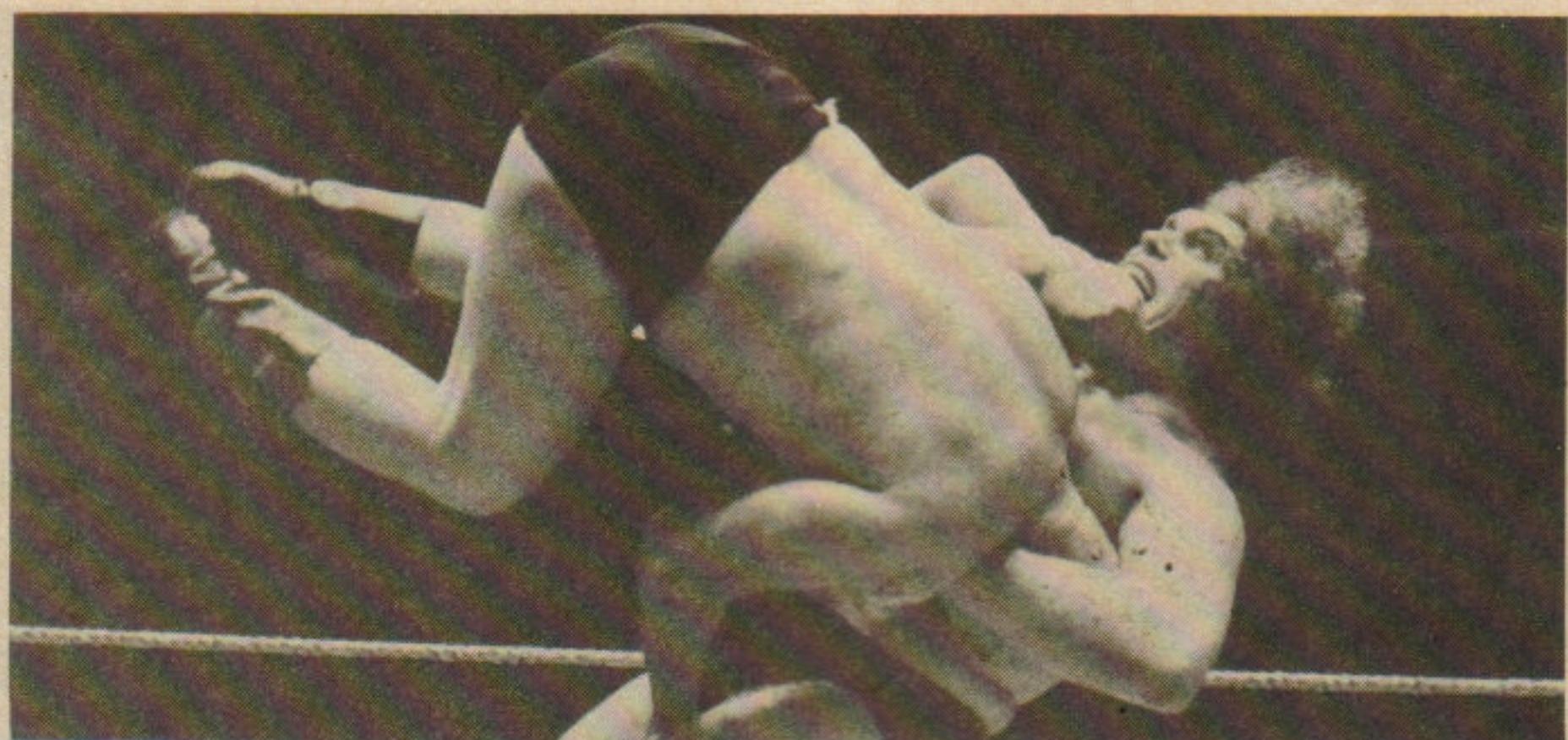
Andre the Giant vs. Killer Khan. When the maniacal Mongolian broke Andre's leg, the French giant was hospitalized for many weeks. While out of action, the frustration and anger grew. Andre hungered for revenge, and his hunger would be satisfied.

In an amazingly uncharacteristic display of violence, Andre attacked Khan with such a vengeance that he caused the Mongolian menace to be placed on a stretcher. Andre would have none of it, however, adding insult to injury by kicking and beating Khan off of the stretcher and out of the ring.

A title change match came in second, as Ric Flair bested Dusty Rhodes to gain the NWA championship belt. Rhodes maintains that his leg was injured that night, but Flair doesn't care. He has the belt and he's content with that.

Bob Backlund's feud with Magnificent Muraco came to a boil in a double dose of vengeance: two title matches at Madison Square Garden. It was the first of these two amazing bouts which snagged enough votes to finish third in the contest. An incredible one-hour time limit draw for Backlund's WWF belt, leading to the inevitable, bloody rematch the next month.

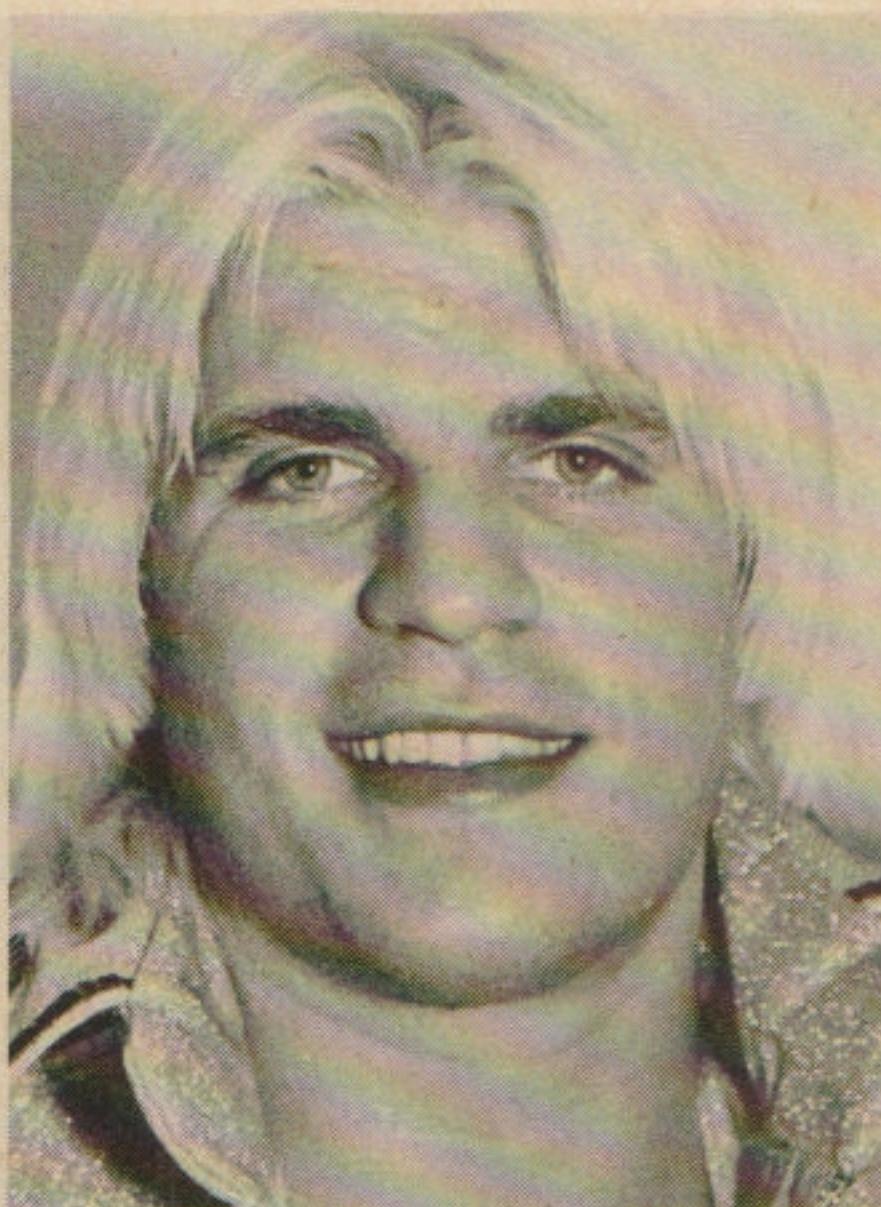
Michael Hayes' intense battle with Terry Gordy followed Backlund-Muraco in the voting to finish a close fourth. □



MATCH OF THE YEAR	
ANDRE VS. KHAN	VOTES
Flair vs. Rhodes	11,543
Backlund vs. Muraco	8,578
Hayes vs. Gordy	7,564
Others	7,004
	18,563

MOST POPULAR WRESTLER

Tommy Rich

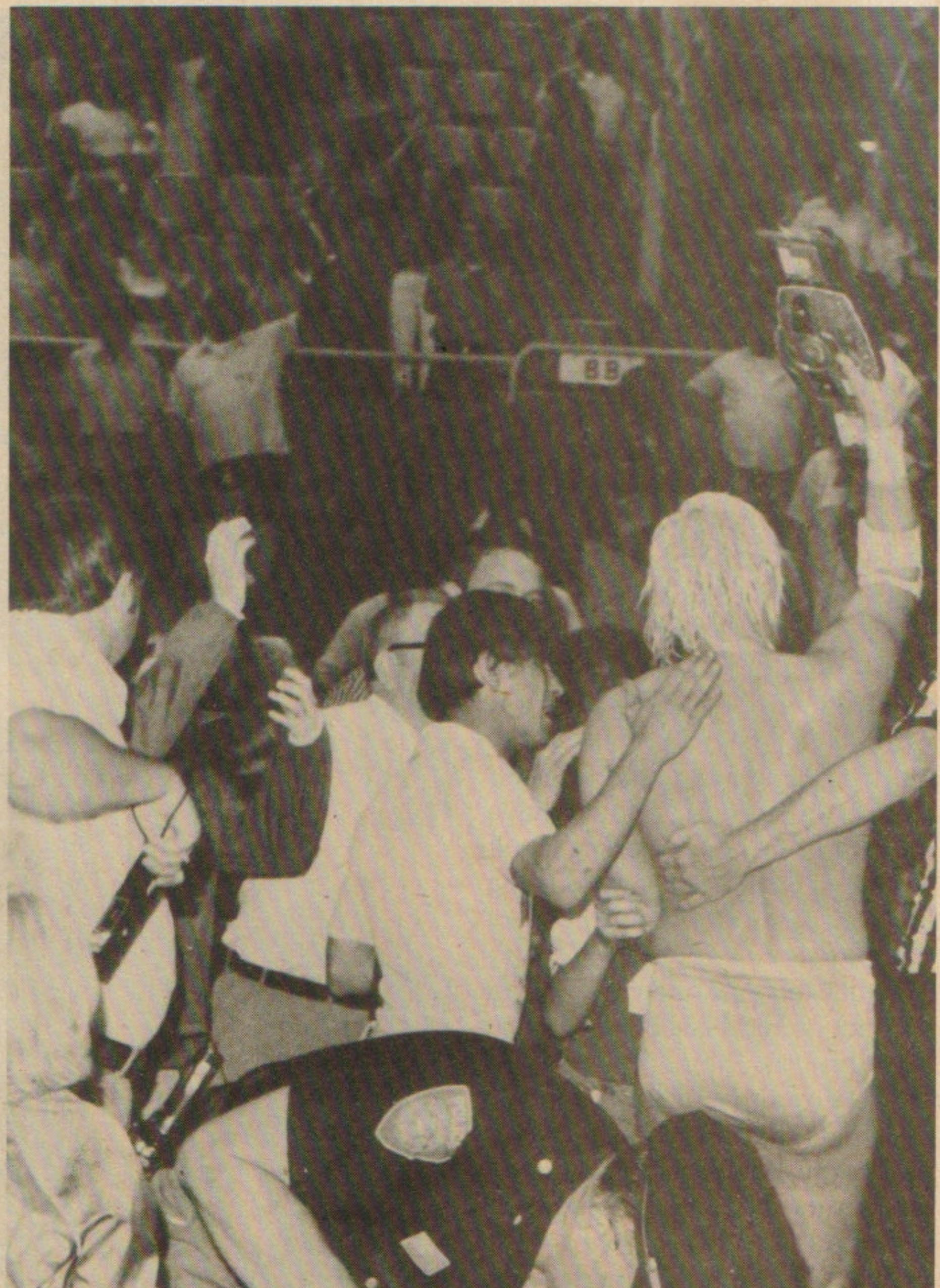


THIS AWARD IS second only to Wrestler of the Year in individual importance. Some would consider it even more important. A violent feud fascinatingly manifested itself in the award results: Where Ric Flair won Wrestler of the Year, Tommy Rich took the Most Popular Wrestler of the Year honors.

"It's a great honor," said Rich. "I'm touched the fans think so highly of me. I'm very pleased to have won this award, and I'm happy to see that sleazy wrestlers like Ric Flair didn't even finish in the top four."

As in the Wrestler of the Year category, WWF champion Bob Backlund finished second.

"I suppose you can't win them all," said Backlund with a chuckle in his voice. "I suppose winning one category and finishing second in two others is a pretty good track



record for one year. I want to thank all the fans who voted for me." (Backlund finished first in the category of Most Inspirational Wrestler [see page 47]).

Coming in third was Andre the

Giant.

"I am very pleased to be considered one of the most popular wrestlers in all of the sport," said Andre, "and this truly means a lot. I know that the fans support me, and I thank them all."

Finishing fourth was former NWA champion Dusty Rhodes.

"Of course I'm popular jack," Rhodes growled, "and you'll notice that Flair didn't even finish in the top four, how do you like that? And he calls himself a champion?" □

MOST POPULAR WRESTLER

TOMMY RICH

Bob Backlund

Andre the Giant

Dusty Rhodes

Others

VOTES

17,254

11,432

8,454

7,601

7,676

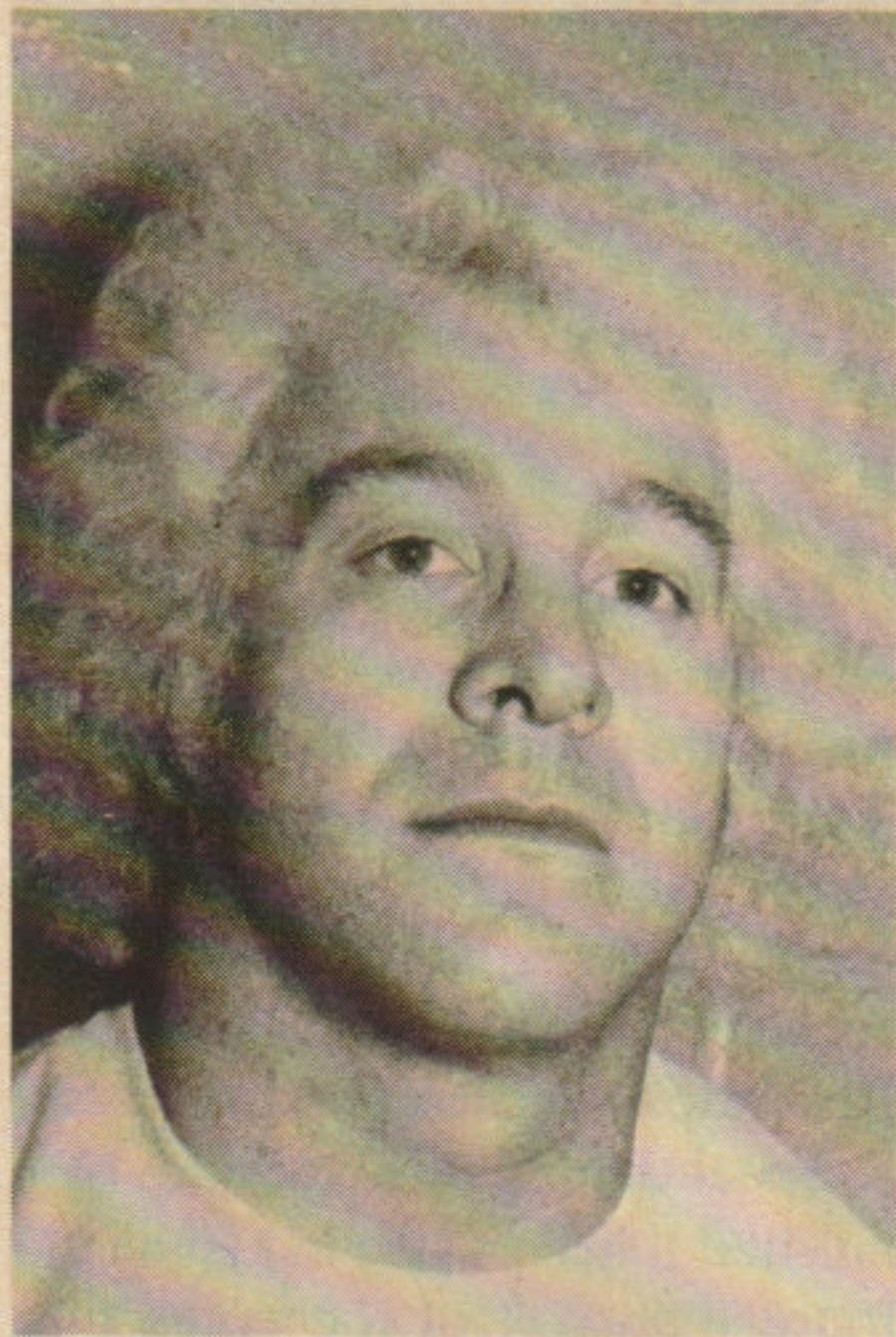
MOST HATED WRESTLER

Ken Patera

THE WINNER in this category hardly has cause to be proud of his achievement. Nevertheless, there are some despicable souls within the sport of wrestling who find it necessary to bask in the glow of well-earned hatred.

This year, overwhelmingly, Ken Patera is that man.

Ken Patera walked away from the Georgia belt to raise hell all across the nation and around the world. Everywhere he appeared, he's been greeted with jeers and boos. It seems to be an award well deserved.



"Oh, what do these stupid fans know?" asked Patera. "You tell them it's day, they say night. Tell 'em you're great, they think you're scum. So for them to think of me as being most hated is in fact a great honor, even if they're too stupid to recognize it."

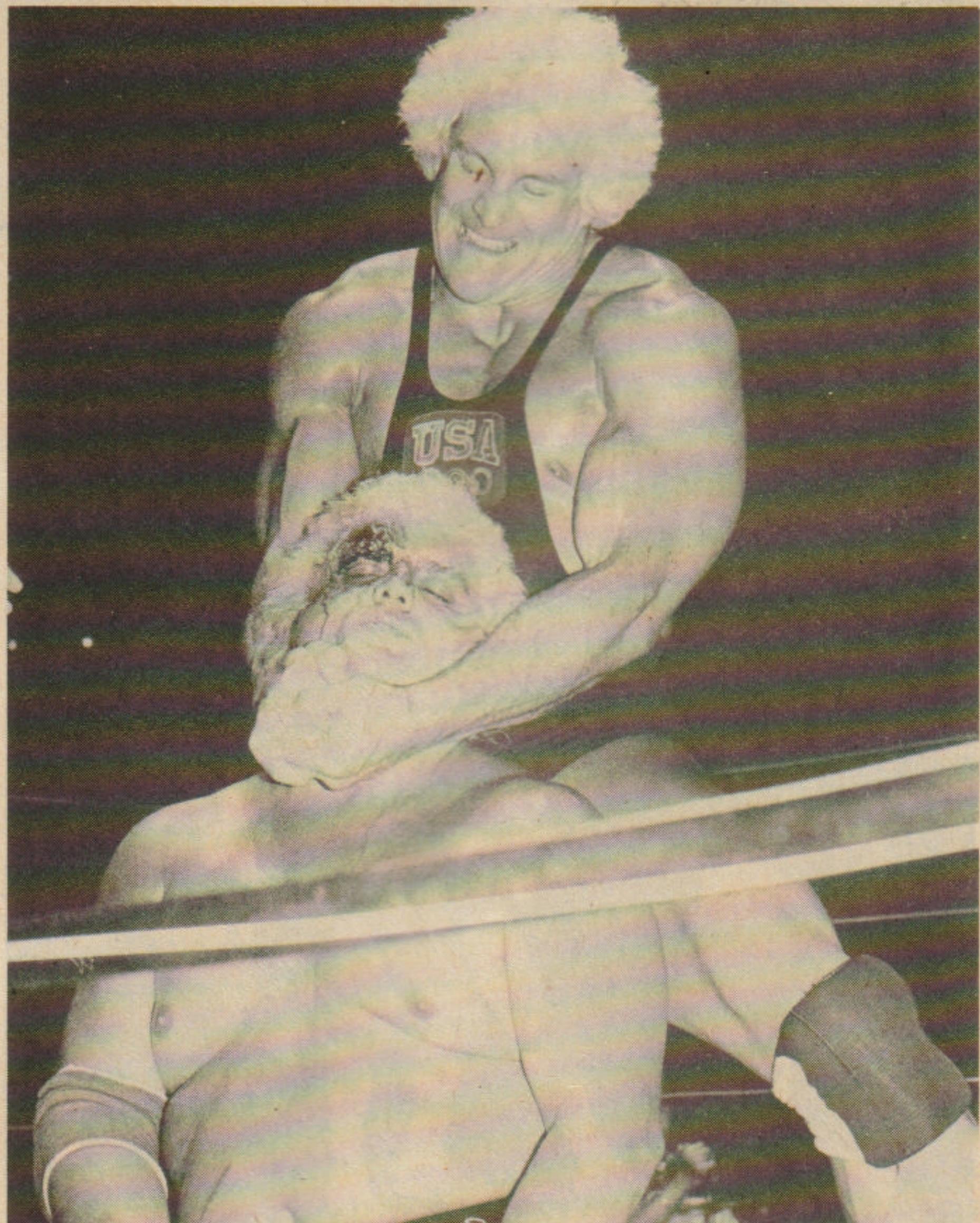
Coming in second was Magnificent Muraco. Most ballots explained that his feud with Bob Backlund and his connection to The Grand Wizard and his despicable five-year plan were

prime reasons for their distaste of him.

In third place, less than 300 votes behind Muraco, came AWA champion Nick Bockwinkel. Noted for his impeccable preparation before every match, most fans cited his continual penchant for egotistical

obnoxiousness as a basis for their discontent.

Finishing fourth, Rowdy Roddy Piper. Many of the fans who voted for (or should we say against!) Piper must have felt a great deal of satisfaction when he lost his U.S. championship belt to Wahoo McDaniel earlier in the year. □



MOST HATED WRESTLER

KEN PATERA

Magnificent Muraco

Nick Bockwinkel

Roddy Piper

Others

VOTES

20,678

8,321

8,045

6,191

6,553

TAG TEAM OF THE YEAR

The Freebirds

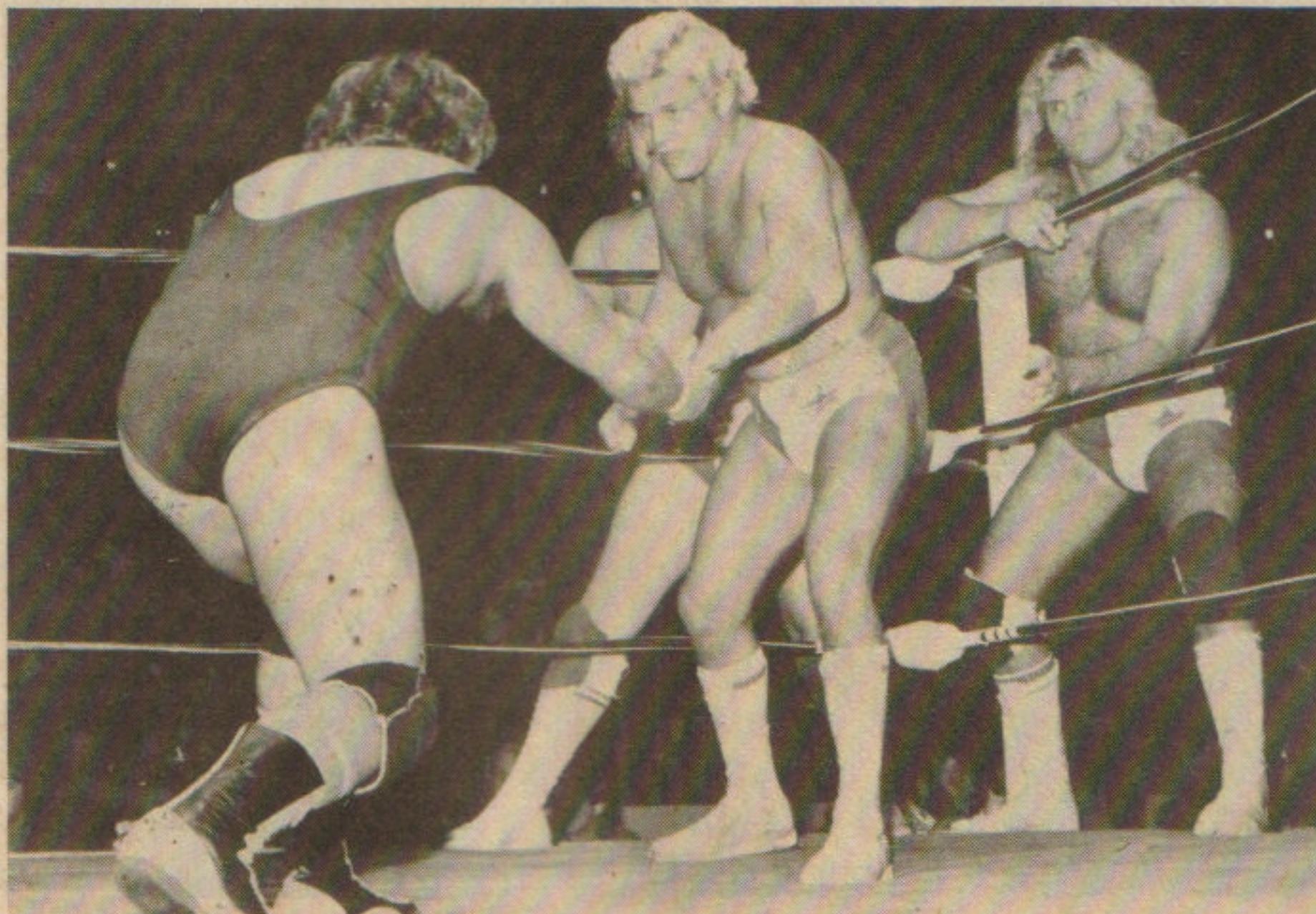
IN EASILY THE most surprising result of the entire poll, The Freebirds came out on top as Tag Team of the Year. It is particularly interesting, since for nearly half of 1981, The Freebirds have been out of circulation, having split up in the

middle of the year.

Michael Hayes was contacted about the results of this category and said that he "is very pleased that the fans had such great judgement this year. I would like to thank everyone who voted for me

for awarding me this great honor. It is my award, after all, since I was *The Freebird* who formed the team."

A mere 55 votes separated first from second place, a notch filled by Tony Garea and Rick Martel.



TAG TEAM OF THE YEAR

THE FREEBIRDS

Martel & Garea

Fuji & Saito

Gagne & Brunzell

Others

VOTES

11,254

11,199

6,772

4,810

16,112

"I'm happy to see that the fans recognized that we put a lot of work into wrestling this year," said Tony Garea. "It was also good to see that Fuji and Saito finished so far behind in number of votes received. We'll get the belts back from those vermin yet!"

Speaking of Fuji and Saito, they finished third, pulling in just a little more than half of the votes that Martel and Garea did.

"When you see what these two guys do for wrestling in 1982, daddies and mommies, you're going to realize that for 1982, my Mr. Fuji and Mr. Saito will overshadow every other tag team on earth, and you can take that to the bank," asserted team manager Captain Lou Albano.

In the fourth spot were AWA tag team champions Greg Gagne and Jim Brunzell, a team from which we will no doubt see much more in 1982 as well. □

MANAGER OF THE YEAR

Lou Albano



WHO ELSE BUT the crazy Captain Lou Albano could have been awarded this honor? An unprecedented 11th tag team combination, Mr. Fuji and Mr. Saito, have made it to the top, and clearly it is Albano who must be turned to as responsible for this amazing feat.

"You know, all the people, all the wonderful fans who are so smart and so sharp and so observant to vote for the Captain," said Albano, "you know you made the right choice here, but that the only mistake you all made was that if you had voted for my men, my champions Fuji and Saito, you would have been 100 percent right, because they deserved to be awarded tag team of the year along with my being named Manager of the Year, and that's the way it should have been."

Less than 3,000 votes separated second, third, and fourth places. In the second place spot, Arnold Skoaland.

"I brought my boy Bob Backlund through some hard times this year," confessed



Skoaland. "It's nice to see that the fans appreciate honest effort once in a while instead of always flocking to see rulebreakers and cripplers."

Sir Oliver Humperdink, who has recently renovated his house of terror, came in a close third.

"Once my men begin their campaign of terror," snarled Oliver, "there will be no other competition left for next year."

These other managers will have nothing left to manage!"

Easing into the fourth spot was the flashiest dresser in wrestling, The Grand Wizard.

"I should have topped the list for sure," Wizard declared. "There are a lot of stupid people out there who call themselves wrestling fans. What gives them the right to vote when they can't even think?" □

MANAGER

LOU ALBANO

Arnold Skoaland

Oliver Humperdink

Grand Wizard

Others

VOTES

15,645

9,121

8,826

6,339

3,283

MOST IMPROVED WRESTLER

Kevin Sullivan

TO CHOOSE WHO has been the Most Improved Wrestler of the Year is a very difficult task indeed. There are no tried and true criteria by which to measure a man's success or failure in improving. The top four winners this year demonstrate various methods at work and show exactly



how changing these various standards are.

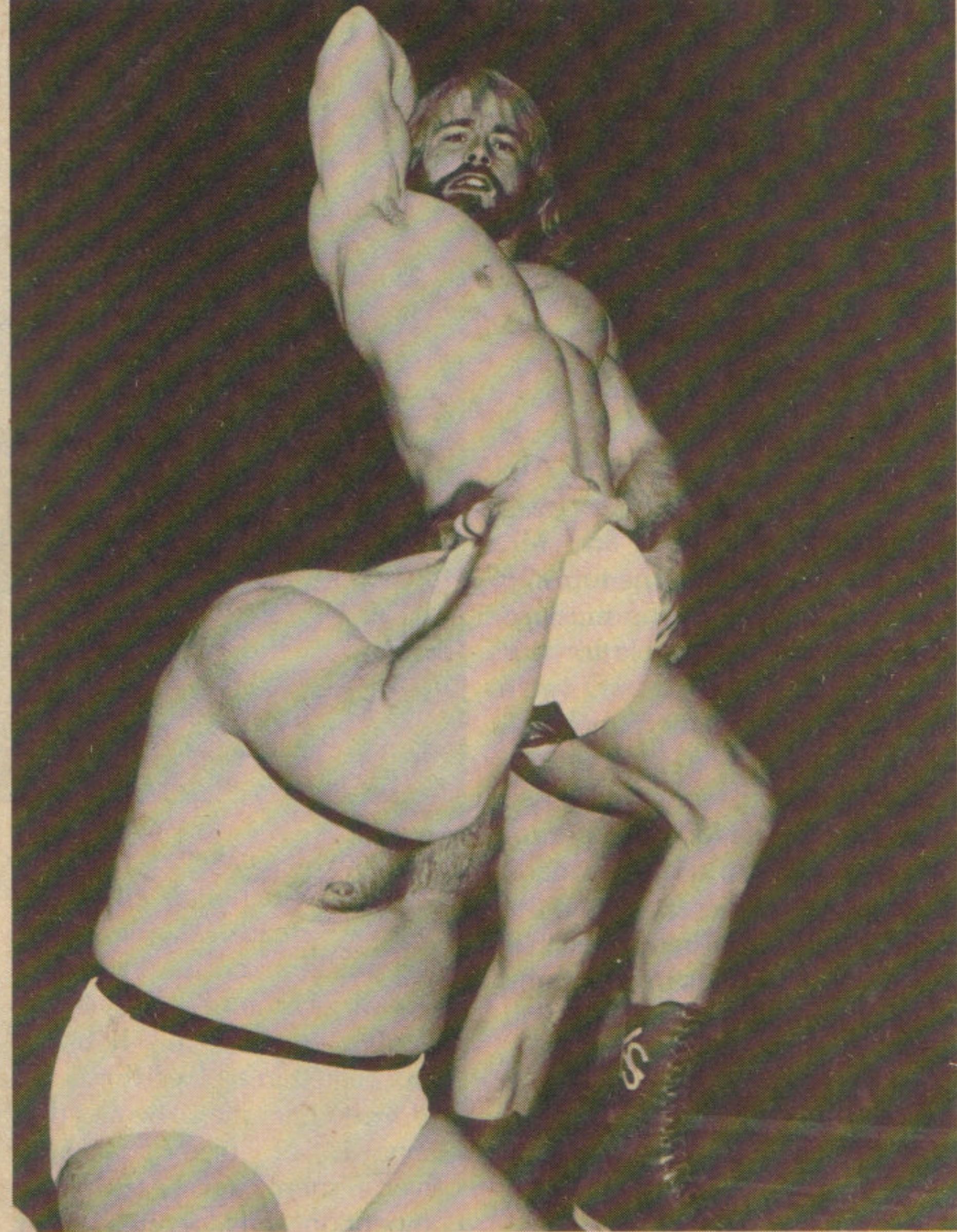
Kevin Sullivan's amazing physical turnaround accounted for the majority of his 15,000-plus votes. Once he decided to switch from scientific wrestler to rule-breaker, he began to work with weights...and work...and work. The result was a physique that is more on the lines of a bodybuilder than a wrestler, yet he has maintained the agility and skills necessary to be a successful grappler. The improvements over the past 12 months are simply awesome, and this award is well deserved.

MOST IMPROVED WRESTLER
KEVIN SULLIVAN
Sgt. Slaughter
Charlie Cook
Tito Santana
Others

Sgt. Slaughter came in second, primarily due to his surprising victory in a tournament to snag the U.S. title. Vowing to bring a measure of discipline to the championship, Slaughter has turned back opponents of the caliber of Rick Steamboat, John Weaver, and Jay Youngblood to

hold onto the belt.

In the third spot was Florida sensation Charlie Cook, a wrestler who has really made 1981 his own year. There is no question that this former football star is on the rise, and it won't be long before he is a major figure on the national wrestling scene.



VOTES
15,342
10,678
7,922
5,888
2,657

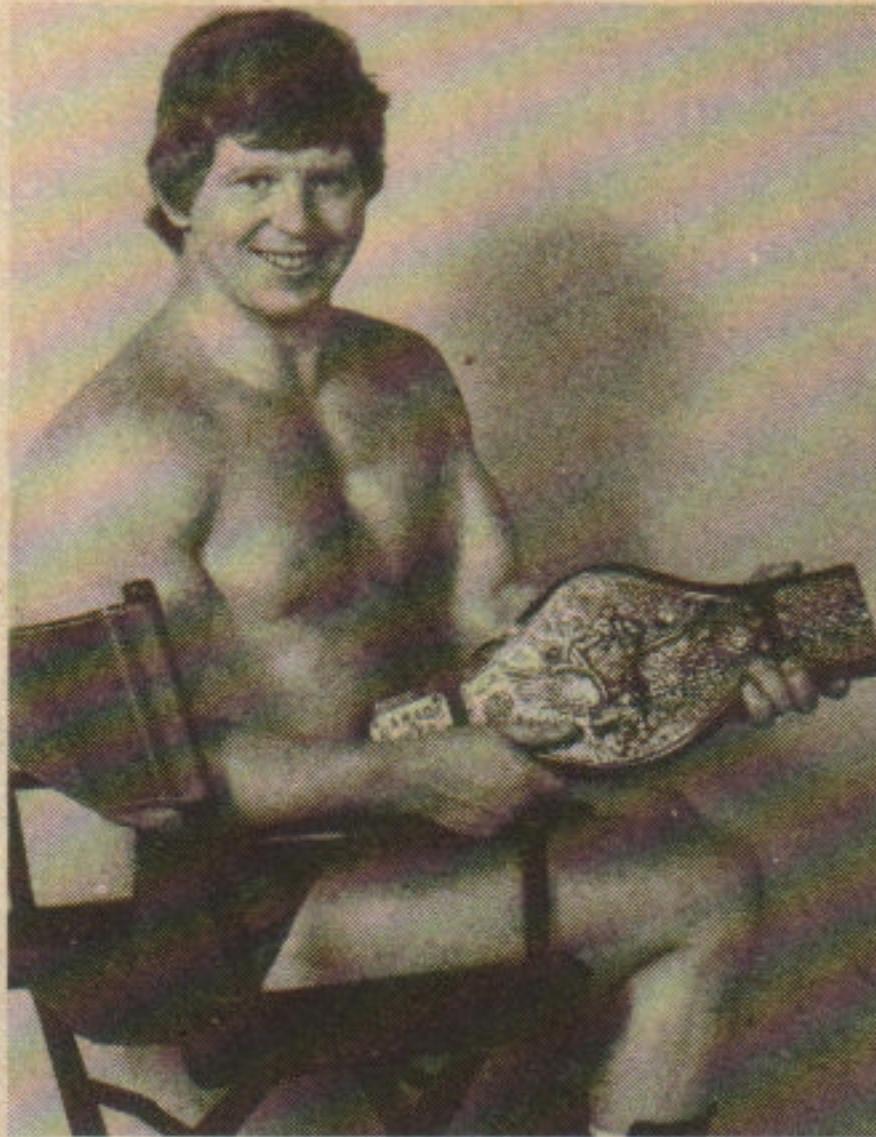
Fourth in the tally was Tito Santana, a man who has also proved to a lot of people that he is capable of turning in performances that far surpass the expectations of most fans lucky enough to be present at his matches. □

INSPIRATIONAL WRESTLER

Bob Backlund

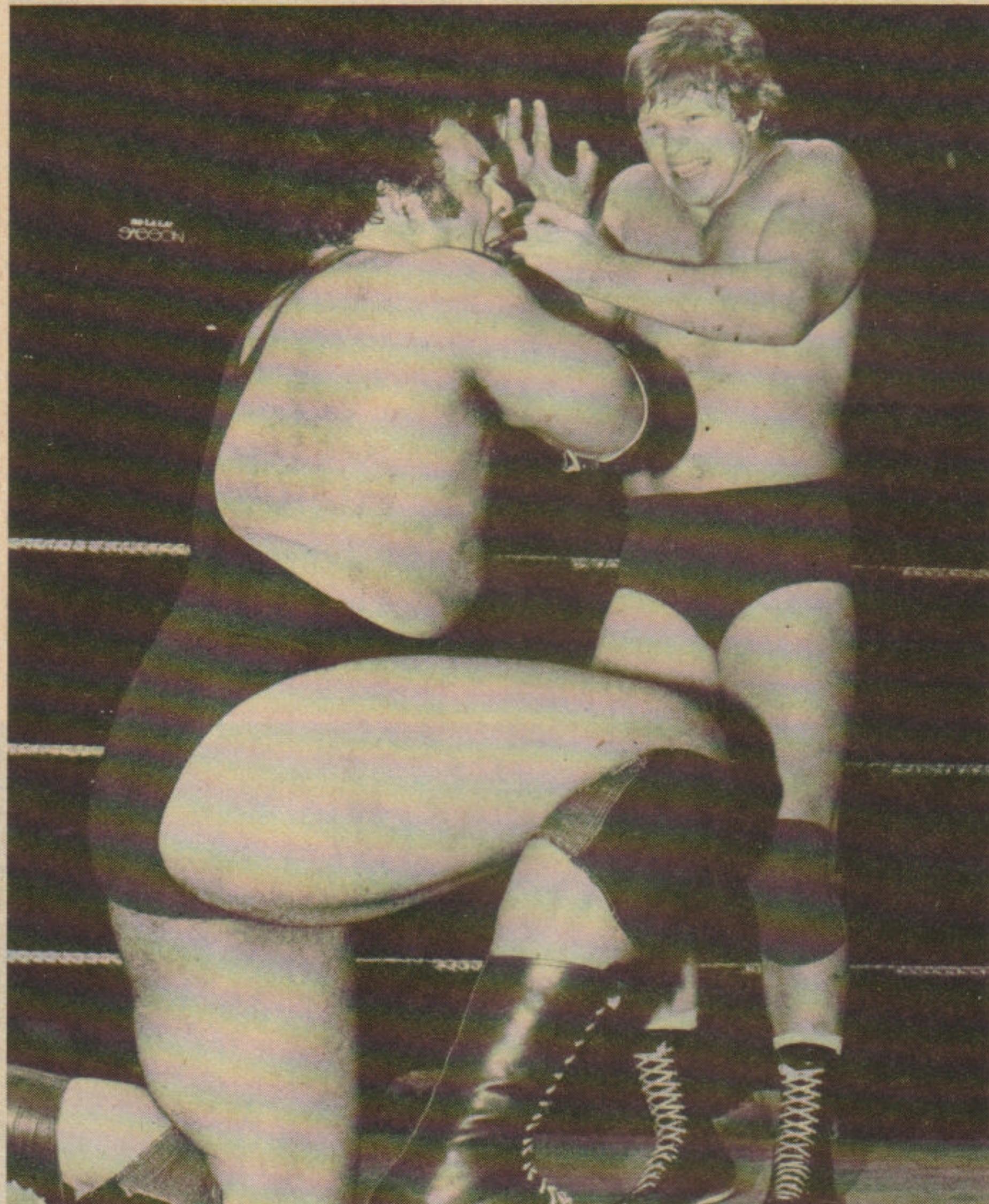
THREE WAS NO question of victory for Bob Backlund, a man who has faced numerous difficulties throughout the year, yet has retained his composure and come back strong every time.

"I had a tough year," Backlund recalls. "Early on in the year, Sgt. Slaughter and King Kong Mosca



made very strong challenges to my WWF title. Then along came Magnificent Muraco and The Wizard and their supposedly foolproof five-year plan. Well, it took me two months to do it, but I turned away that challenge, too. And then Greg Valentine thought that he was going to be able to push me around. I emerged victorious from that challenge as well. Thank you, everyone who voted for me. It means a tremendous amount to me, and I'll be thinking about it when I step into the ring with whoever they put against me next."

Ted DiBiase captured the second-place honors. "There is something about his style," wrote Angelina Consadine of New Orleans, Louisiana. "Every time I watch him wrestle, I walk away with a feeling that can't be



matched anywhere else. That's why he gets my vote!"

Coming in third, Tito Santana received a tremendous amount of praise for his selfless dedication of a match against Nick Bockwinkel to Santana's pen pal, an unfortunate victim of Down's syndrome.

"I think that not only that match," said Santana, "but this

award as well should go to my friend Pat. It's Pat who is the true inspiration, not me. I only made the situation known to the fans. I'm happy with the way they responded, and this honor from the fans should go to Pat as well."

Finishing fourth was Mr. Wrestling II, a true inspirational fixture for fans everywhere he wrestles. □

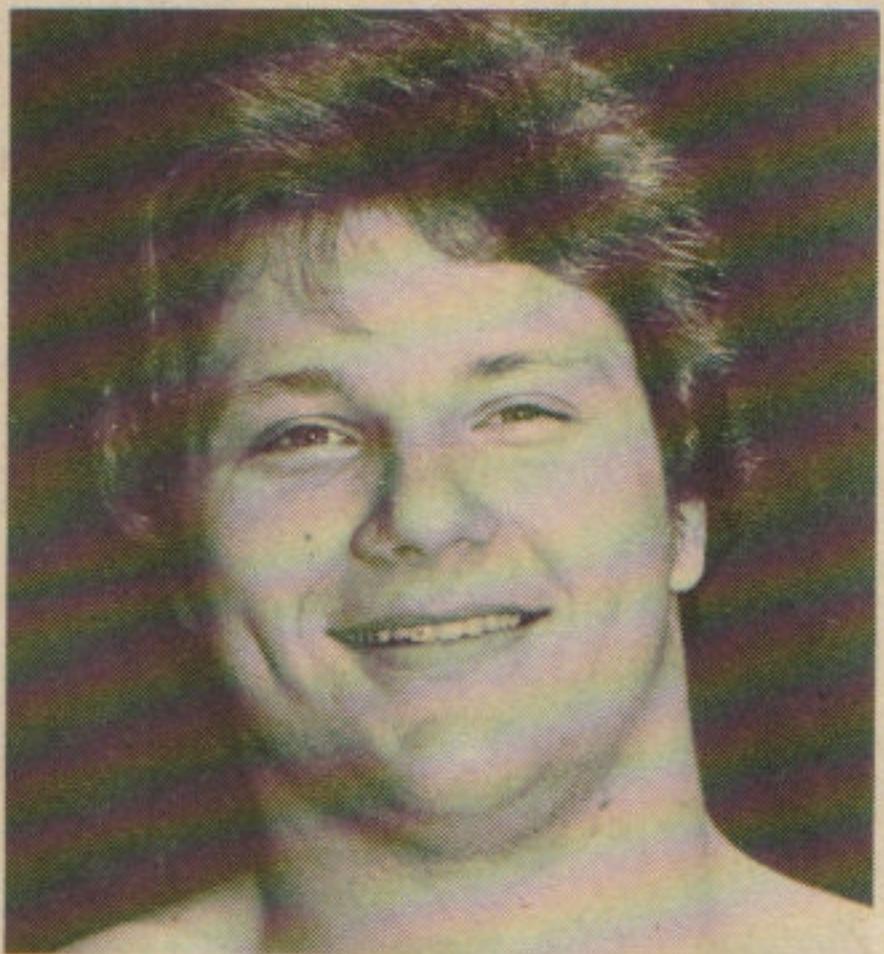
INSPIRATIONAL WRESTLER	VOTES
BOB BACKLUND	12,412
Ted DiBiase	7,773
Tito Santana	6,938
Mr. Wrestling II	5,999
Others	9,422

ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

Bruno Sammartino Jr.

IT WAS A very close contest in this category. Less than a thousand votes separated the top two spots.

Edging into the top spot was



Bruno Sammartino Jr., who appears to be following his father's legacy of greatness.

"Bruno Sammartino Jr. is beginning to become as great as his father," said Steve Farkas of Hohman, Indiana, "but what is really admirable is that he is developing his own unique style. It would be so easy for him to simply rip off his old man, but I have to admire greatly the way he is staking out his own territory. He is really deserving of the fans' respect, and I for one am ready and willing to give it to him."

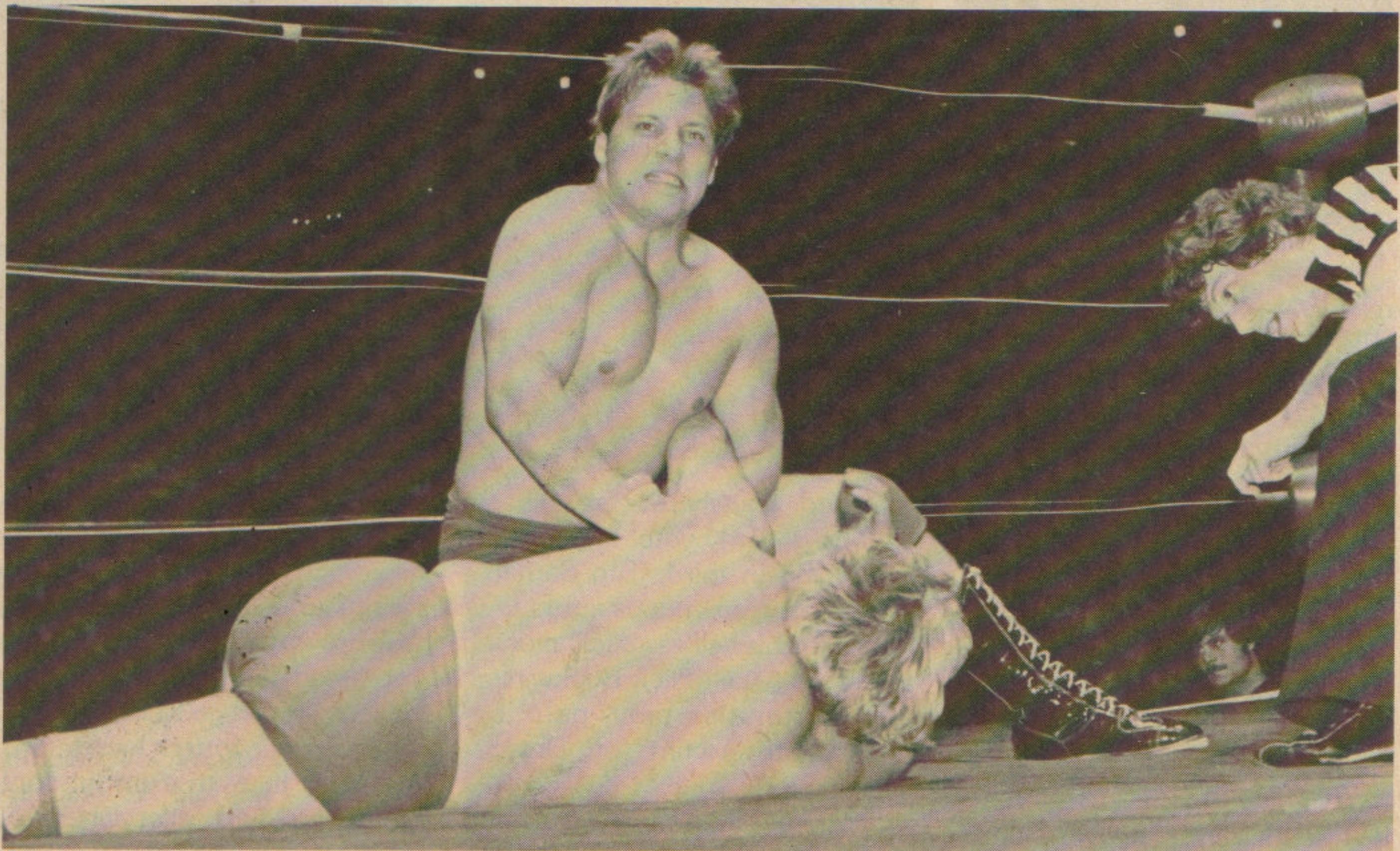
Brad Rheingans, who finished a very close second, was very pleased to hear that he received so

many votes.

"Less than a thousand votes from winning?" he asked, "I think that's pretty good! It could have gone either way, given just a few more people who could have sent in ballots. I'm very, very happy with this honor, and I'm proud to receive it. Second place with nearly 12,000 votes can hardly be called losing!"

Another chip off the wrestling block, Curt Hennig, son of Larry "The Axe" Hennig, came in third.

"It looks like a good year for sons, huh?" said Hennig with a laugh. "First place Sammartino, and now me! Thanks to everyone who voted for me. I promise I won't



ROOKIE OF THE YEAR
BRUNO SAMMARTINO JR.
Brad Rheingans
Curt Hennig
Ron Richie
Others

VOTES

12,678
11,876
6,541
6,124
9,342

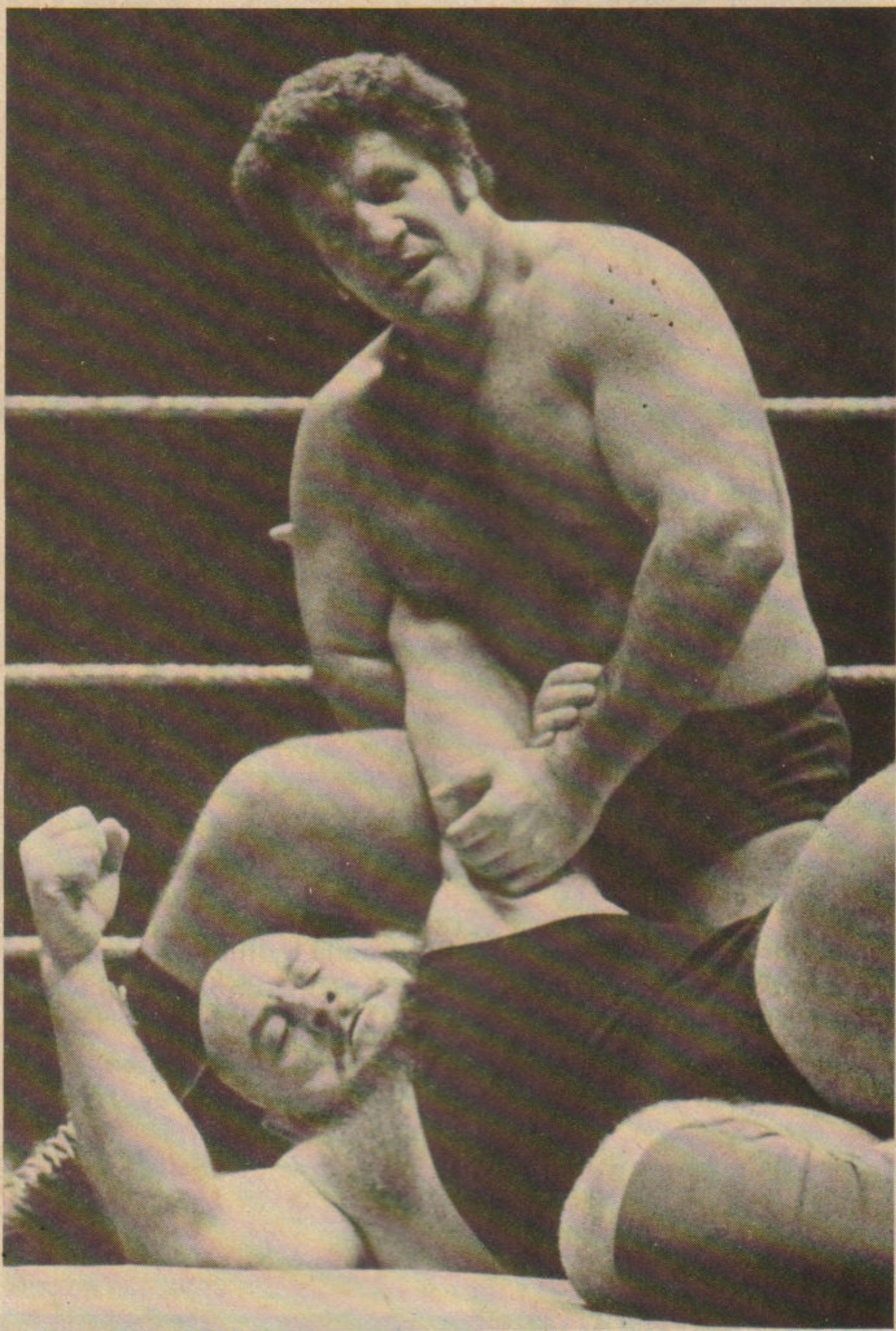
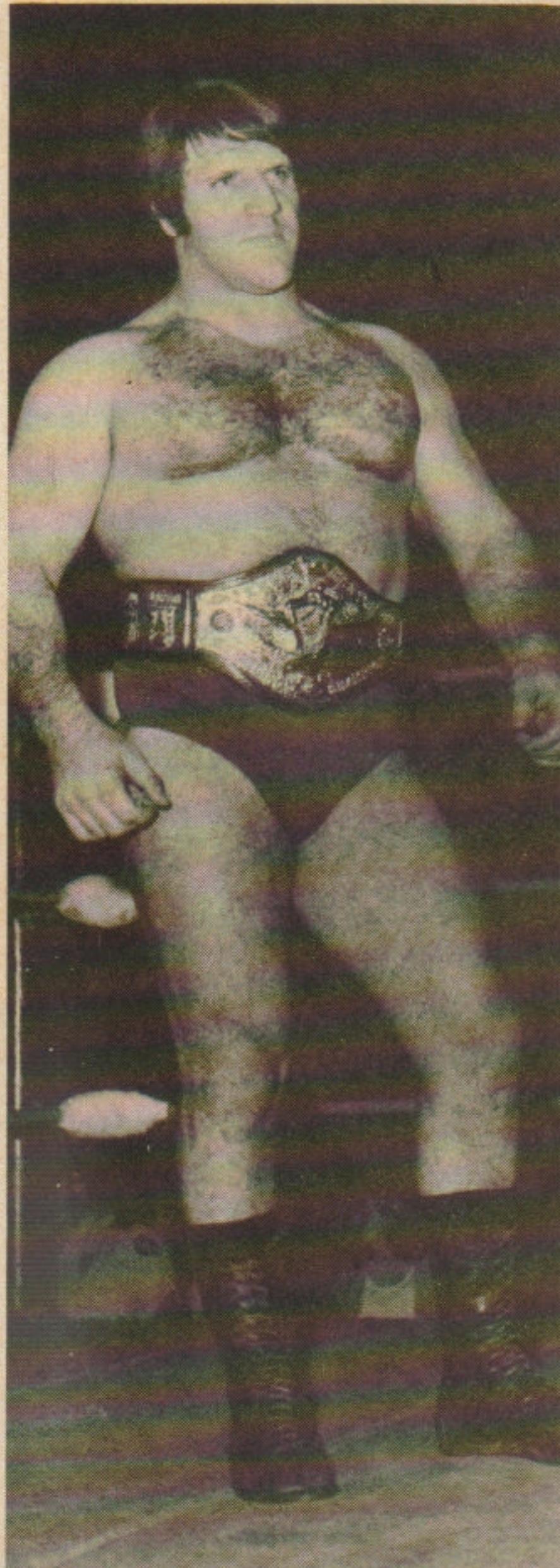
let you all down in the year to come."

In the fourth spot, up-and-coming Florida star Ron Richie brought in a very strong regional vote to trail Hennig by slightly more than 400 ballots. □

Special Honor: FIRST ANNUAL "EDITOR'S AWARD"
Bruno Sammartino Sr.

WHILE SIFTING THROUGH and reading the thousands upon thousands of ballots which came into our offices over the past weeks, we noticed a very interesting pattern beginning to emerge. Many voters were making comments similar to that of Arthur Belker, East Moline, Illinois.

"How come there is no appropriate category for someone like Bruno Sammartino?" Belker wrote. "After all, he's retired, so he really can't fall into any specific category . . . and his contributions



to the sport of wrestling transcend any categorical distinctions anyway? There ought to be some sort of special award for him."

So, in response to overwhelming popular pressure, the *Pro Wrestling Illustrated* Editors Award is hereby established. It will be presented to that one wrestler who has risen above the demands of his sport to contribute something special and lasting to

the history of the squared circle.

For lifetime contributions that have not only made him the living legend that he is, but that have also brought the enjoyment of professional wrestling to millions of fans around the world, the first annual *PWI* Editors Award goes to Bruno Sammartino.

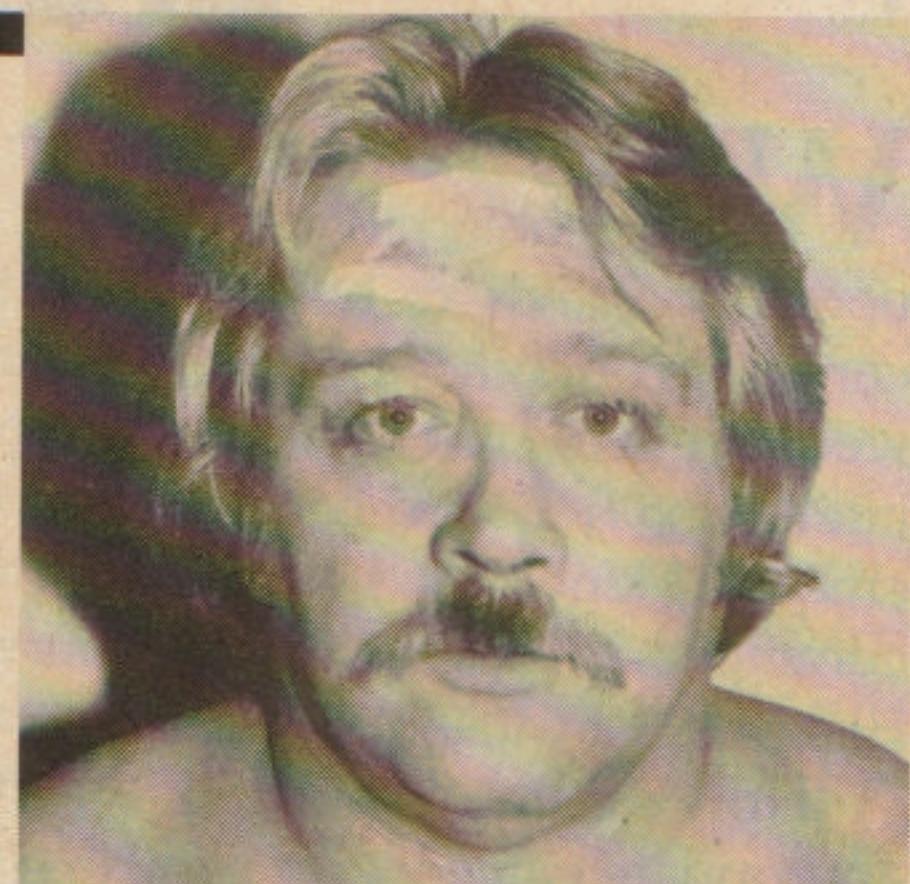
Congratulations, Bruno, and many thanks for 22 years of superb performance. □

WHAT THEY ARE SAYING

(Continued from Page 29)

RAY STEVENS

"These people think they've got trouble now? My tag team partner Tor Kamata and I are only beginning the campaign of terror here in Georgia. These wrestlers here think that they're giving us a hard time? Well let me tell you, there is no competition here that we can't destroy . . . and we will!"



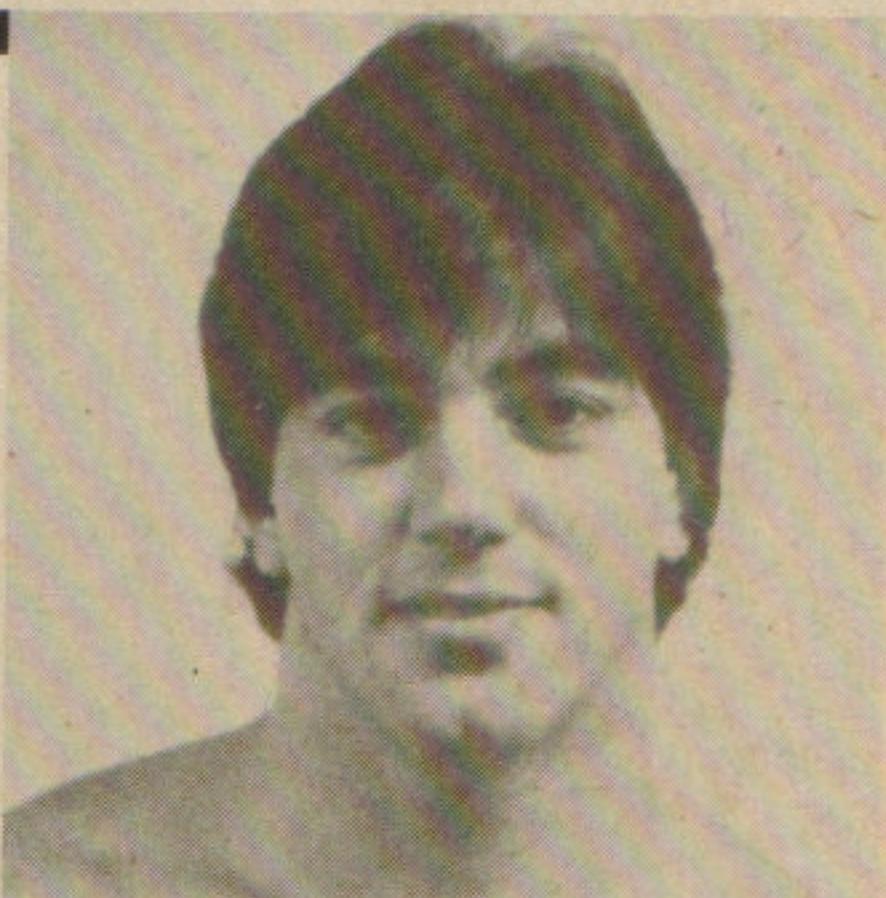
S.D. JONES

"I'm proud to be working with Tony Atlas. He's a great wrestler, and a great man. To be in a tag team with him is an honor and a privilege. We work well together because we both have similar styles, and it blends well in a tag team situation. What I want to know is: I drink my milk every day, how come my body doesn't look like that?"



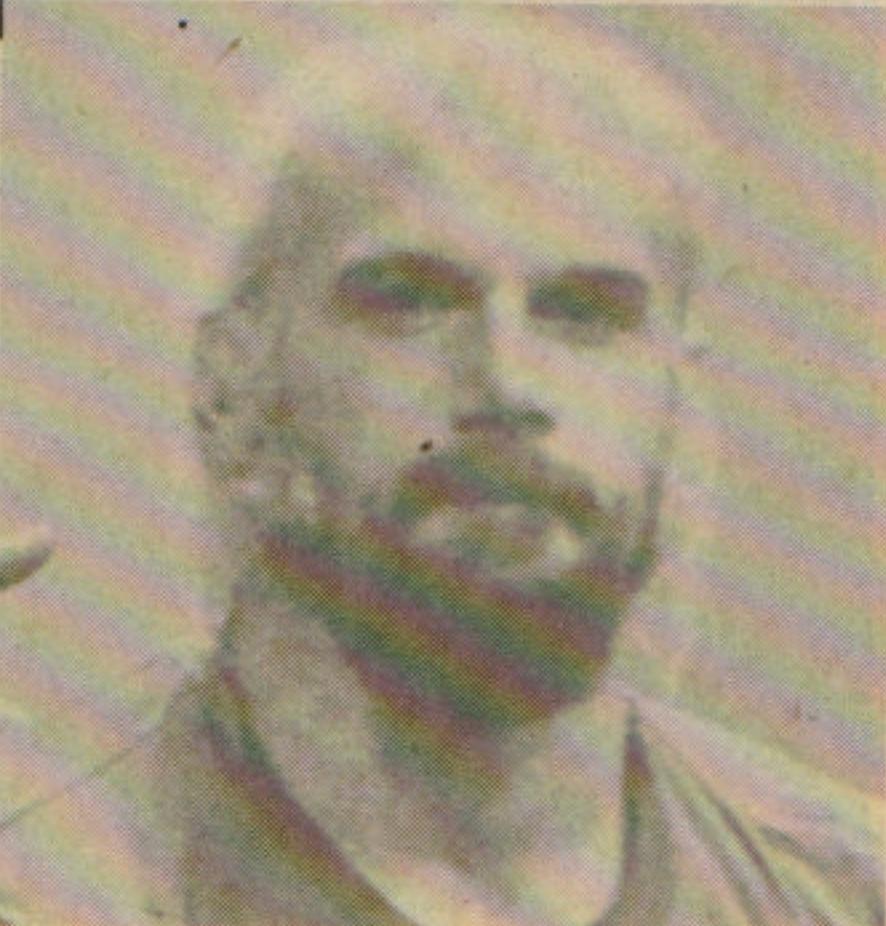
RICK MARTEL

"Tony and I were cheated out of our belts by those snakes Fuji and Saito. We won them fair and square, and we will win them back fairly. We know we are champions, and we will not stoop to the level of Fuji, Saito, and sleazy Lou Albano in order to regain what should rightfully be ours anyway."



JESSE VENTURA

"All these musclemen think they have a great body. You know, when I walk down the street I have so many beautiful women following me, hounding me for dates, clawing at me for just a touch of this beautiful physique . . . it's enough to make a grown man cry. That's why they call me Jesse 'The Body' Ventura."



At Ringside

(Continued from Page 10)

matches. "We are after him!" Hart claims. "Rhodes is a marked man."

Paul Jones, who has been out of the spotlight in the past few months, refuses to discuss his self-imposed layoff with anyone. Paul is working his way back through the ranks in the Mid-Atlantic region and is undefeated in his last 24 outings as of this writing.

Luckily for Mid-Atlantic champion Roddy Piper, his match against "Wildfire" Tommy Rich was a non-title bout. Rich beat Roddy so badly that Piper is now staying far away from signing a title rematch . . . Tito Santana, the proud owner of Houston's Gold Cup Trophy and the \$50,000 prize money that went with it, is now wrestling regularly in Houston. Besides wanting a shot at Nick Bockwinkel's AWA title, Santana is anxious to square off against Gino Hernandez. "I used to call him friend," Tito says. "Maybe by beating him I can straighten his head out."

St. Louis referee Joe Tangaro was forced to disqualify both The Bruiser and U.S. champion Sgt. Slaughter after they teamed to shove him out of the ring during their intense battle . . . Steve Keirn, who now holds the Mid-America belt, is trying to "clean the dung" out of Jimmy Hart's stable of wrestlers. That includes, he says, The Dream Machine, Chick Donovan, Stan Lane, and Koko Ware. By the way, Hart's tag team of two masked men named Nightmare and Speed, vow to halt Keirn's quest and then his career.

Killer Khan, who was negotiating to wrestle in the Mid-Atlantic, still intends to do so, but he also wants to stay in the WWF. His manager, Fred Blassie, says, "Killer wants to finish up his work here for his fans." What fans?

That's all for now. See you at ringside! □

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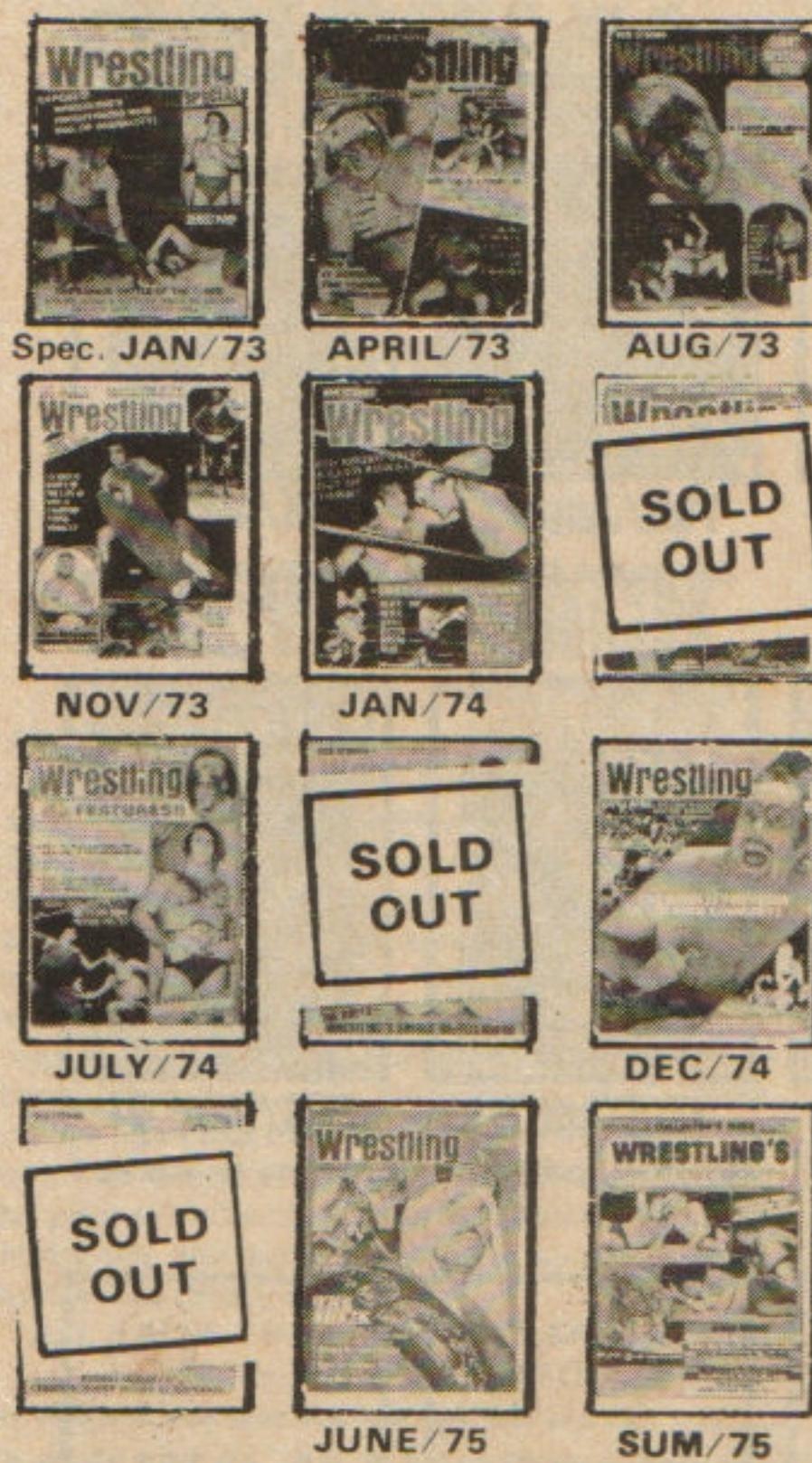
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Dressing Room Confidential

(Continued from Page 12)

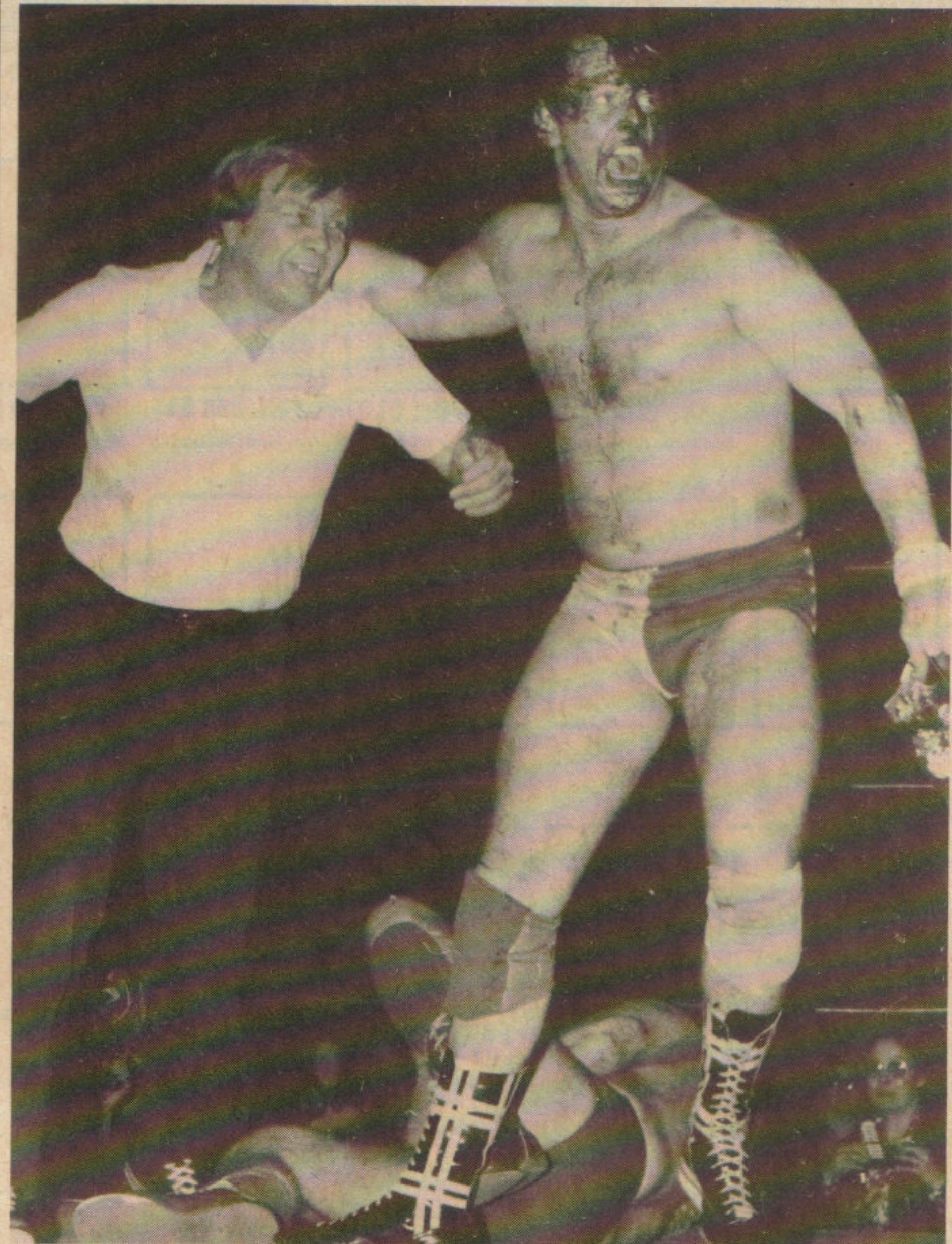
him; the Mid-Atlantic belt means as much in the Northwest as a container of yogurt does to Crusher Blackwell.

"I like to get back to the Northwest as often as possible," Piper said. "But the demands of defending my title have me tied up in the Mid-Atlantic. You know, it's a shame, too. Because the people in this part of the country treat you like trash. I hate it here, but I want to keep this title real bad."

Roddy Piper is correct in noting how differently he is treated in the Mid-Atlantic, but he is dead wrong in thinking that there is any difference in the people themselves. Piper brings the contempt of the Mid-Atlantic fans upon himself.

He's a talented wrestler with an abundance of intelligence, grace, and speed who chooses a seedy, underhanded path to success. To assure his victory over Rick Steamboat for the Mid-Atlantic championship, Piper

After finishing off his opponent, Piper goes after special referee George Scott (below). Piper secures his sleeperhold on former NWA titlist Harley Race (opposite right). Stu Saks sees little hope of Piper changing his ways.



hired Abdullah the Butcher to disable the champion in advance. When Piper finally wrestled for the championship, Steamboat was only at 70 percent efficiency, having to perform with a severely injured arm. A true champion would look upon such a victory as tainted. Roddy Piper considered it money well spent.

It's sad to see such behavior in any man, but it is particularly sad to see it in a man who knows how gratifying it can be to wrestle by the rules and receive the love of the fans. Like so many others these days, Piper has



put the intangible rewards of love and honor a distant second to his desire for money and power. How easy it is to make money when you sacrifice the respect of those around you.

Strangely, through all the changes, he retains his self-respect. That's the saddest part of all. If he didn't like what he was becoming, there would be every reason to hope for reform. I respect the fans of the Pacific Northwest for their loyalty toward Piper. Every man deserves the opportunity to right his wrongs. But when a man no longer recognizes the difference between right and wrong, I'm afraid to say there is no hope. □

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On Assignment

(Continued from Page 18)

New York. But considerate even under the ultimate in emotional stress, he insisted I stay.

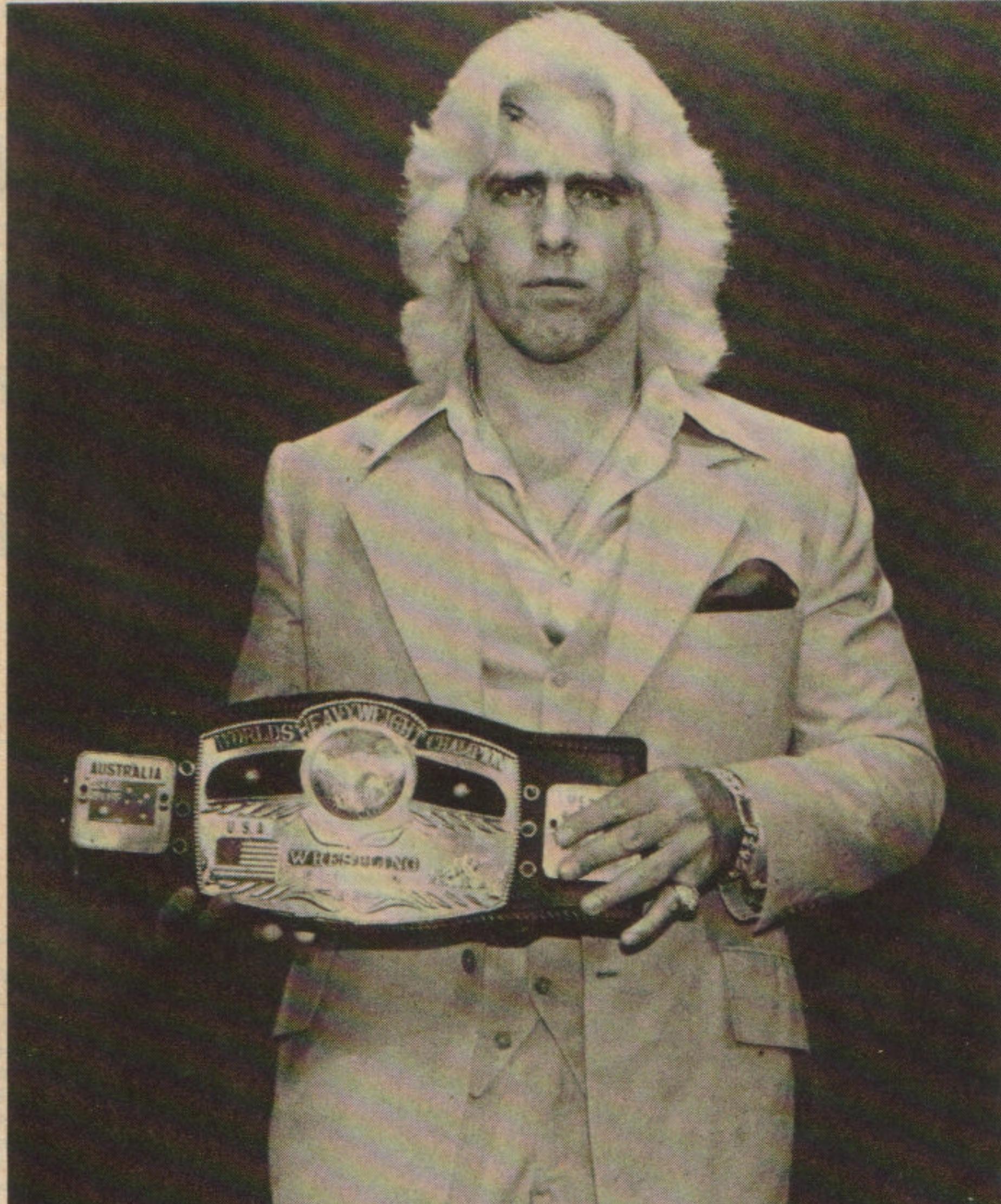
And that is how I came about spending time in a Minneapolis funeral parlor with Ric Flair.

I walked in three paces behind the champion, such a commanding figure with his golden locks resting on the collar of his navy-blue pinstripe suit. There was no applause as he entered a room full of people, no shrieking women, no fans screaming for his blood. Those attending the funeral of Bobby Felton all knew Flair, having watched him grow from

a mischievous child into one of the most successful athletes in the world. But this was no time for adulation. This was a time for sorrow and sympathy.

Flair and the mother of the deceased did not have to speak upon making eye contact. Mrs. Felton extended her arms and began to quietly sob. Flair stepped forward, hugged her for a long time, and kissed her softly on the cheek. He did not say a word. He did not have to. The moisture in his eyes spoke for him.

Then Flair walked to the open casket and knelt in front of it



Flair has told Associate Editor Steve Farhood that all future defenses of his NWA belt are dedicated to the memory of Bobby Felton.

between two huge floral bouquets. He closed his eyes, bowed his head, and prayed for the soul of Bobby Felton.

We only stayed for a few minutes because Flair was going to Mrs. Felton's house later that evening. I didn't want to overstep my boundaries, so all I said was, "I could see there was a lot of love in that room."

"I wish you had known Bobby, even for a few minutes," Flair answered softly. "I grew up with that boy. We lived three blocks from each other. His mother used to kid me because I was at their house so much. 'Here's my other son, Ricky,' she'd say. Me and Bobby played together, fought together, spent the summers together, laughed and cried together, partied together, and became men together. I always used to wish to myself that I'd go before him. But when you're our age and life is before you, you really don't think about those things. Now he's gone and I have to live without him. I really don't understand any of this."

He choked on his last words and didn't say anything else for quite a while. I felt somewhat uncomfortable, yet I knew I was seeing a side of Ric Flair I would never see again.

Two days later, Ric Flair eulogized Bobby Felton in front of more than 100 friends and family at their church. I was in New York, but somehow I wished I had been able to stay in Minneapolis. I'm sure Flair was poignant and eloquent. I had seen the inside of this human being so many people call a rulebreaker. I had shared with him a moment in his life when all the strength and power and championship heart was reduced to grief and love and sorrow.

Win or lose, I thought to myself, this is a man. This is a man. □

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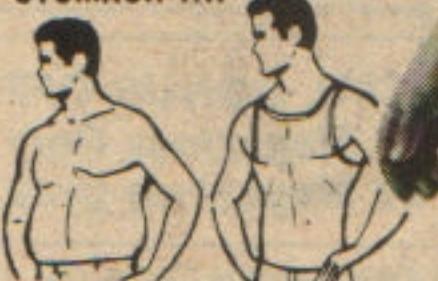
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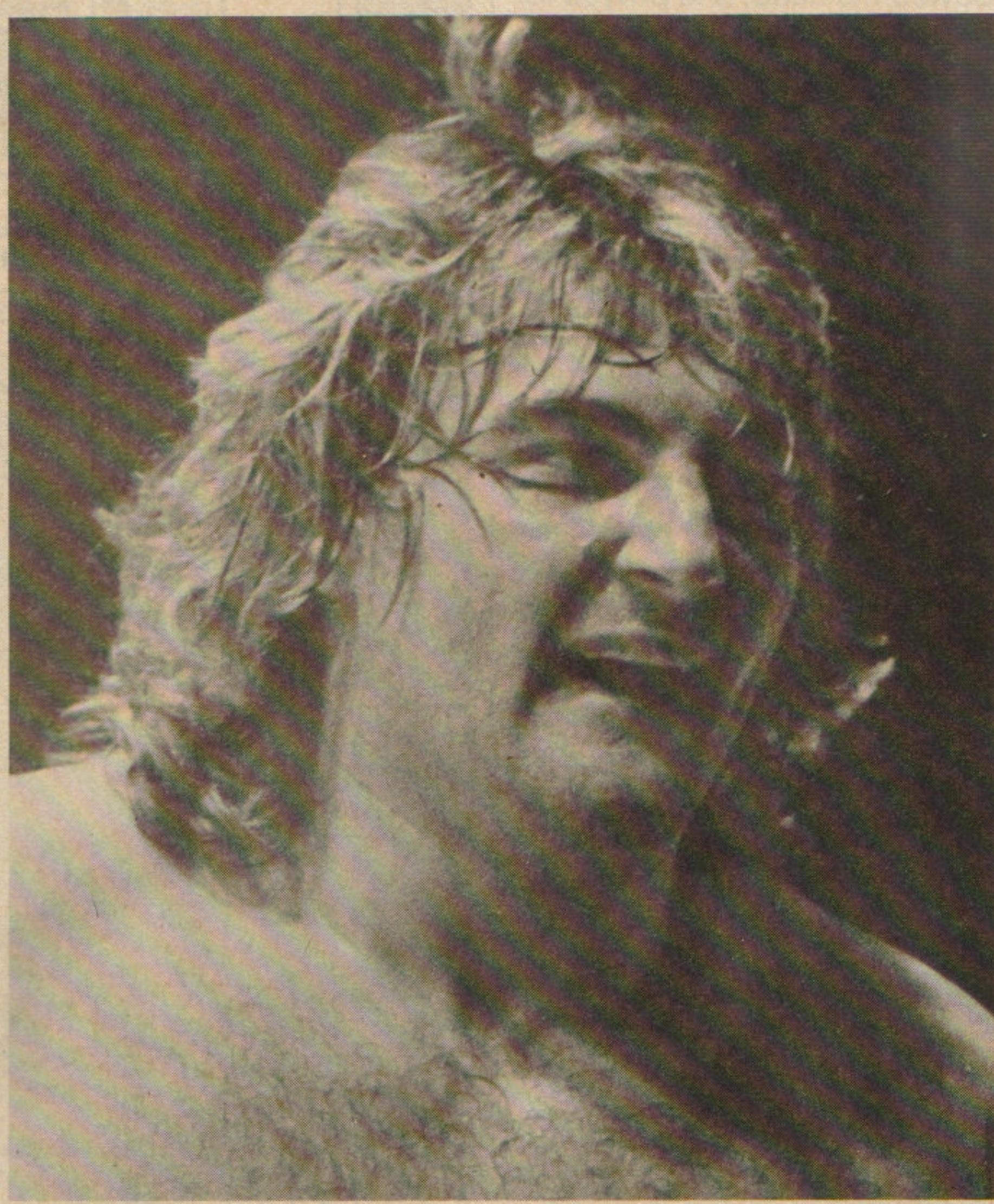
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King's Court

(Continued from Page 8)



punks. When we grab for what's rightfully ours, you call us criminals. Well, you can all go to hell. I'm a winner, jack. You people who play by the rules are just fools."

Once again, Adonis turned his back on me and gazed up at the bridge. "You want to know why I hate Bob Backlund?" he asked, his voice now a harsh whisper. I said yes, I would like to know. Adonis, his back still towards me, began to laugh.

"I hate Bob Backlund because he's always had it so easy. Nice friendly homes and nice friendly high schools and nice friendly coaches and nice friendly gyms."

Suddenly, Adonis wheeled

Adonis is very bitter about the lifestyle he has been forced to live and vents his anger on his opponents.

around and walked up to me. He was only inches away. His eyes blazed and his voice was shrill.

"I hate him because he's had everything and I had nothing. But now I got the chance to get equal. All I gotta do is take what he's got. And when Adrian Adonis wants something, brother, he gets it."

Adonis turned and walked away, leaving me alone. I suddenly became aware of the intense cold and shivered. I wondered how many other people could feel sorry for a cold-blooded animal. □

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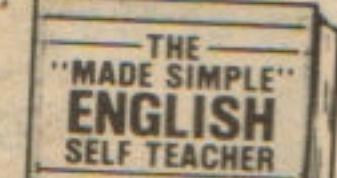
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In Focus

(Continued from Page 14)

CLASSLESS CHAMPIONS



SAITO & FUJI

All right, all right, I knew I would have to face it sooner or later. "You wanna pay the band, you gotta dance," says Steve Farhood, or something like that. Anyway, I gave a nod of recognition to Fuji and Saito last issue. Since writing that column, Albano's latest tag team has become champions.

The way they did it, though, was just plain bush. Salt in the eyes of Rick Martel? Sleazy maneuver. I hereby withdraw any compliments of Fuji and Saito I may have previously made. I actually thought they had a little more class than that. I guess P.T. Barnum was right.

CHAMPIONSHIP CALIBER CONFUSION

Here we go again. Now it's Tommy Rich demanding that he deserves the NWA title. Remember when Assassin #1 said he pinned Rhodes and that he deserved the belt? Well, now it's happening again. Wouldn't you know it, too, that Dusty Rhodes is involved again? What goes on here? Dusty has a title shot against Ric Flair. Rhodes is attacked before the match by The Great Kabuki; and Gary Hart. Tommy Rich is there, substitutes for Rhodes, and winds up pinning Flair! BUT—Rhodes signed for

a title match, not Rich, so the result is that Flair winds up keeping the belt. These discrepancies are absurd, and it seems to me that some sort of universal ruling should be adopted regarding the champion and title matches. At least all this confusion, chaos, and mudslinging would be avoided. In the meantime, we have a champion who's been pinned by someone who is recognized as a prime contender anyway. You go figure it.

Flair-Wrestling II

(Continued from Page 34)



Wrestling II tries to squeeze a little sense into Flair's head. Rarely will II show such anger in the ring, but rarely will an opponent treat him as disrespectfully as Flair did.

most virulent attack ever printed about a wrestler. Somehow, the reporter who wrote the story accepted everything Flair told him without question. There were no statements from II in the story, just remarks from Flair.

"I'm in Atlanta," Flair was quoted in the article, "to give Mr. Wrestling II his final title shot. I am doing this because I am a kind champion. Everyone knows II is finished and can't get any more top matches. I heard a story that the man was completely broke. This is sort of a charity match on my part. Of course, I promise not to hurt him too much. It's amazing that a 76-year-old

man like II can even walk, let alone wrestle."

The article continued in much the same way. For a proud man like Mr. Wrestling II, the obvious lies in the story hurt him deeply.

"What kind of stinking journalism is this?" II said, now more sad than angered. "The newspaper probably put some cub reporter on this story who doesn't know a thing about wrestling. But all of my fans will read this junk. What if they believe it?"

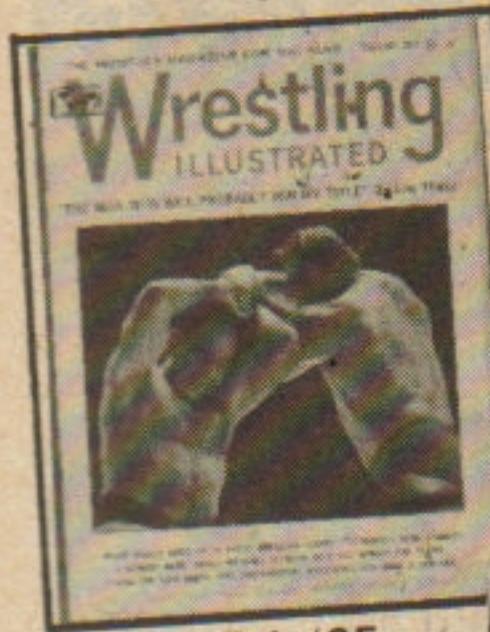
The makeup man applied the finishing touches to Ric Flair's face. "Get me a mirror," the NWA champion

(Continued on page 64)

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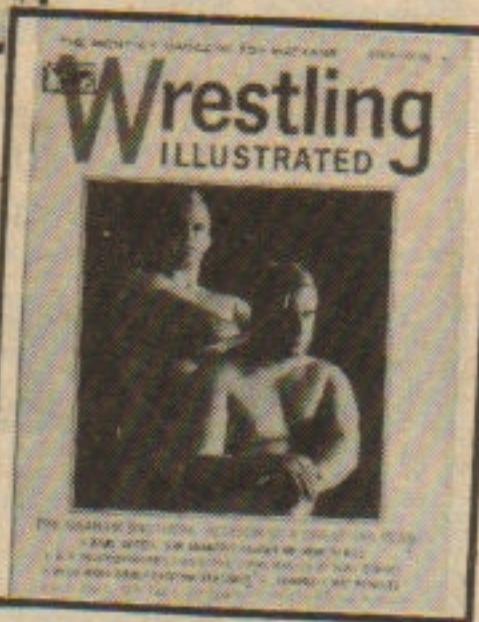
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Flair-Wrestling II

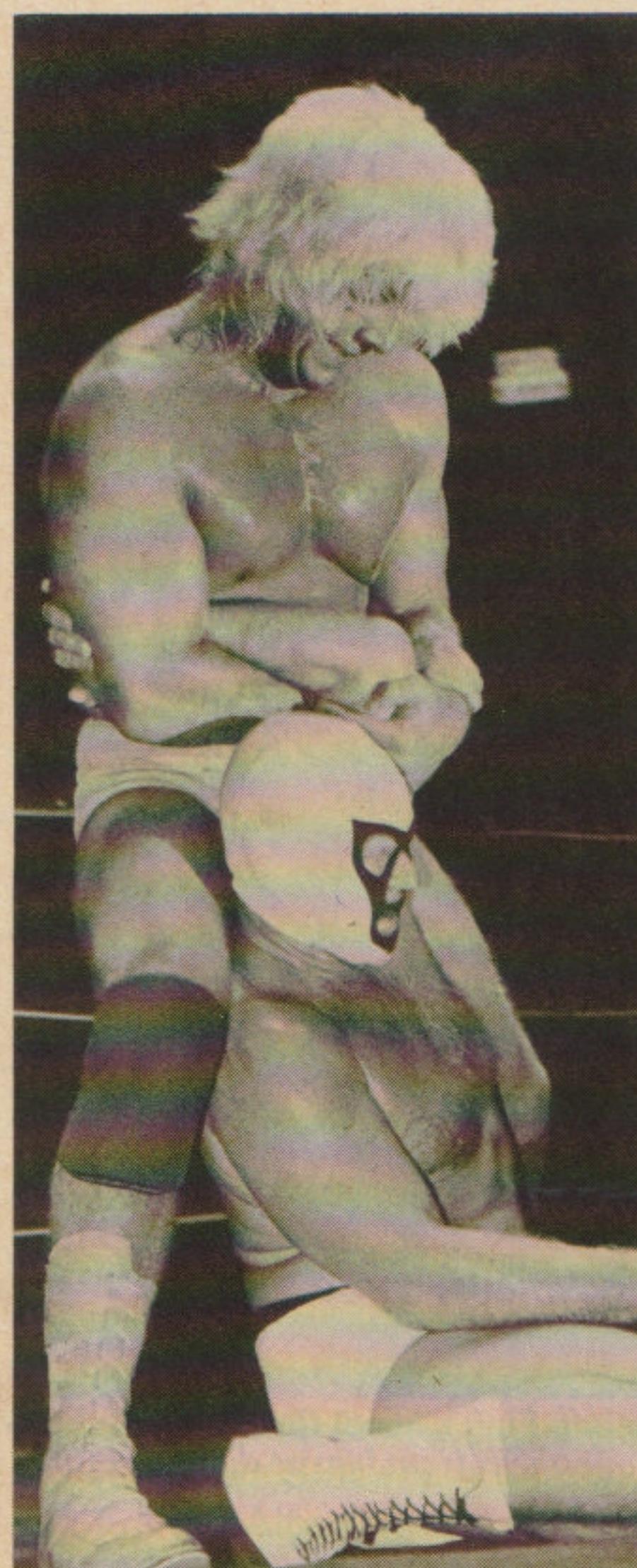
(Continued from Page 63)

state, where the average IQ is 97. I invite everyone out there to see the match later tonight. Except of course the squeamish. I am the champion of the world. He is a stumbling bum who should have retired 30 years ago. This will be, to say the least, a terrible mismatch."

Many miles away, a figure in a white mask sat in his home watching. His hands clenched into fists and he bolted upright. A kick to the television screen brought about a loud "whoosh" and Flair's face disappeared amongst the broken glass.

The crowd at the arena issued a collective buzz as the main event was seconds from beginning. A championship match between Ric Flair and Mr. Wrestling II had filled the arena to capacity. Both men stood in their corners listening to the introductions. Flair entered the ring looking smug and cocky. But one glance at his masked challenger, and suddenly the champion became serious. The eyes behind II's mask burned with a furious hatred. When the bell rang, Flair seemed to pause before moving forward.

The bout was a whirlwind of brutality. II swarmed over the champion like a shark in a frenzy. Kneelifts, headlocks, and elbowsmashes turned Flair's face into a blotchy mess. For about 10 minutes, Flair was forced to wrestle defensively or lose his belt. His offense sputtered in the wake of II's onslaught.



II feels Flair should do his talking in the ring where he has shown extraordinary skills over the years.

ordered a stage hand. "I have to make sure my hair looks all right."

It was just seconds before Flair was scheduled to give a live interview on a local Georgia TV show. The red light atop the camera glowed, and the interviewer introduced Flair to the audience.

"You are in town to wrestle Mr. Wrestling II," he said. "How about your prediction on the outcome."

Flair stared directly into the camera. "Mr. Wrestling II is an old, old man. I suppose he is the perfect hero for this



The agile II reaches for Flair's head in an effort to escape the champion's hammerlock.

Finally, after about 35 minutes, Flair was forced out of the ring by a stunning II bodyblock. Flair stood on the outside of the ring looking up. He grabbed the top rope and put a boot onto the ring apron, ready to pull himself back into the fray. Then, suddenly, Flair released the ropes and stepped back onto the arena floor. He turned his back on the ring and walked to the dressing room. The referee awarded the match to II via a countout.

"I gave the punk 35 minutes of hell," an exultant II said back in his dressing room. "I got this match because I was the top contender, not out of charity. He may have humiliated me before the match, but tonight it was he who ran like a scared rabbit. It was him they were pointing to and laughing at. I had something to prove out there tonight. And I think I did."

In his dressing room, Flair held an ice pack to his swelling face. He sat on a bench against the wall, battered and exhausted. When asked if he would comment on the match, Flair wearily lifted his hand and shook his head. Perhaps he realized he had already talked more than enough. □

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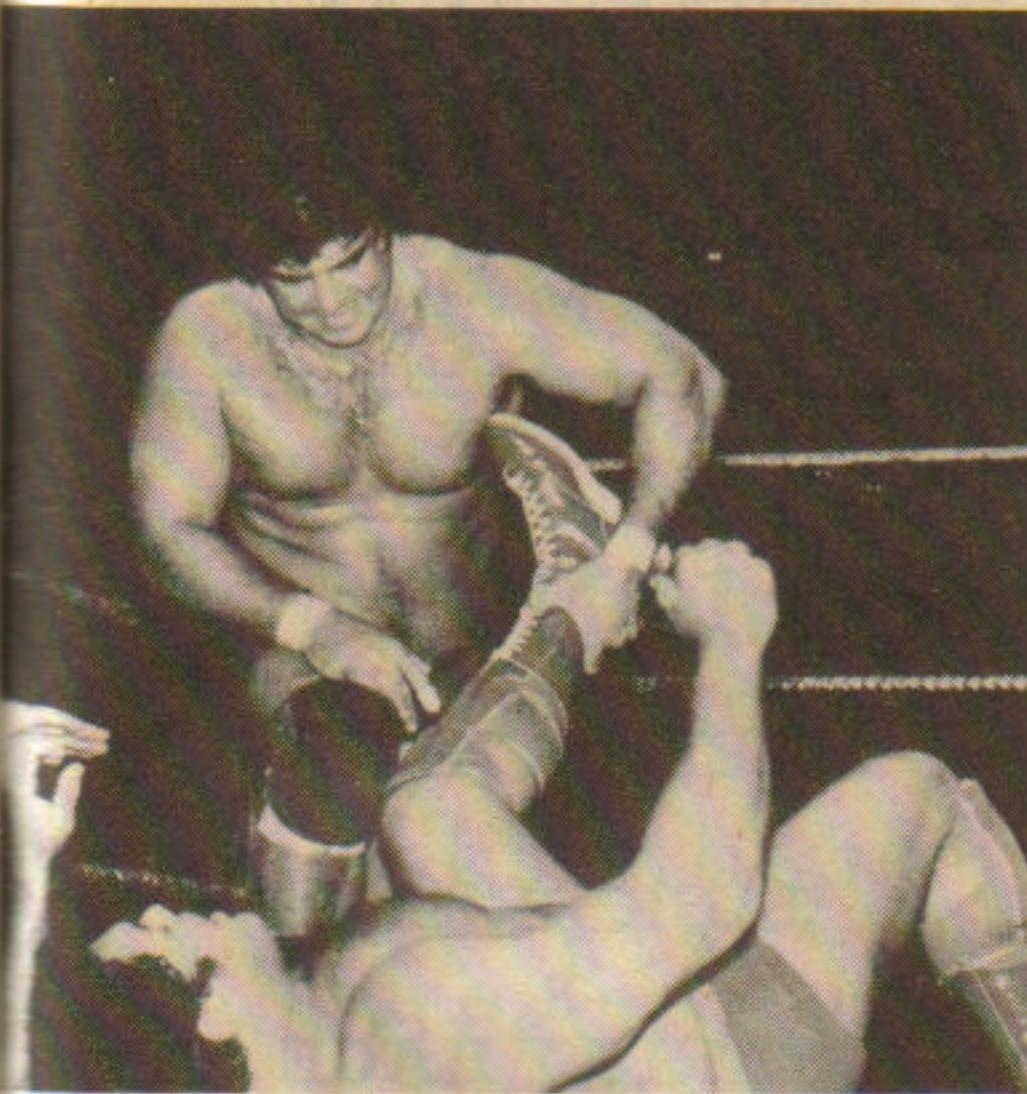
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Again, again, and still again, the head of Muraco was pummeled and mutilated. Blood streamed down his forehead into his eyes. His hair was completely matted in red. His face: a gory testament to animal instincts gone berserk. His voice: gurgling from the flow of blood into his mouth.

Yet still Morales continued his campaign of terror. If he thought that this type of action would allow him to regain the Intercontinental belt, he was sadly mistaken. Better late than never, the referee intervened to stop the match and a severely pained and bloodied Don Muraco staggered his way back to the dressing room area.

We don't care why Morales



and Muraco find the need to wage war in this fashion. We don't want to know the reasons. All we know is that continued bloodshed and violence at this level of intensity can only harm the sport of wrestling, not to mention the heads of Morales and Muraco.

Don Muraco is now out for revenge against Pedro Morales. We are sure that there is no doubt in his mind that he will achieve it. That is yet another reason why these contests must be halted.

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